Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh

D. R. GOYAL

RĀDHĀ KRISHNA

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RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH
by D. R. Goyal

To
Om Prakashji
who was so keen about
a comprehensive book on the RSS
but when it was completed
only his memory was left behind.

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Naim Ahmed has done the computer setting and borne with me the pains of many and repeated changes of text and format.

Introduction

Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh has figured prominently in the discourse on Indian politics with the growing importance of the Bharatiya Janata Party during the decade of nineties. The veil that acted as cover for the somewhat clandestine relationship was discarded after the 1989 parliamentary elections when the latter emerge as a crucial support behind the formation of Janata Dal government. The BJP chief L.K. Advani, in a victory celebration meeting declared that the party owed its spectacular success to the collective efforts of the Sangh Pariwar, that is, the front organisations sponsored by the RSS.

This organisation has remained for long an inscrutable enigma of the Indian social-political life. Even today not much is known, and less understood, about its real character and operation. It would indeed not be wrong to say that it owes its growth and progress to the aura of mystery that it has deliberately cultivated, Callow adolescents find in it satisfaction of their craving for innocent romance; for them it is a kind of secret society working towards a utopia. Once caught in its web few are able to outgrow utterly irrational and disruptive notions they imbibe, especially because most of them do not feel that it is an impediment to making good in life. It has thus made inroads into different spheres of India's national life.

For the first two decades of its life the RSS kept itself severely away from public eye; publicity in any form was strongly resented. Such behaviour seems strange because most organisations in public life try to propagate their ideas and broadcast their activities with the object of attracting adherents and spreading their message. Anonymity was chosen by the promoters of the RSS because it was an attempt at diverting the nation's mind away from the path of anti-imperialist unity that Gandhi had charted.

It came into public notice first during Partition riots, partly on account of its role in helping some Hindus to escape from the atrocities in West Pakistan and more for provoking and organising revengeful anti-Muslim pogroms in north India. There was a wave of anger against the RSS in the wake of assassination of Gandhi. Though the RSS claims innocence in the context of that crime people had spontaneously risen against it because its members were widely known to be spreading bitter hatred against Gandhi on account of his efforts for harmony between Hindus and Muslims as also for peace and friendship with Pakistan. The Government clamped a ban on it charging it of spreading disruption in society and working to defeat the aims and goals of free India.

The ban on it was lifted when it gave an undertaking to respect the Constitution and the National Flag, to confine itself only to cultural field, to eschew politics, to work according to a written constitution and to admit minors only with specific permission of their parents.

If it had any intention of stepping into politics (the post-Partition situation seemed to be most congenial) it had to be abandoned in the aftermath of Gandhi murder. For nearly two decades thereafter it kept a low profile. On the eve of the first general elections (1952) a political party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), was floated with Dr. S.P. Mookherjee as its head. He had earlier resigned from the presidentship of Hindu Mahasabha to join Jawaharlal's cabinet and then quit on grounds of differences over Nehru's Pakistan policy. The organisational infrastructure for the new party was provided by the RSS. Mookherjee was a tall enough personality to allay any apprehension that his party would be dominated by the RSS whereas the past Mahasabha background and current differences with Nehru reassured the latter that its ideological approach would remain intact. The BJS was aptly described by Craig Baxter as born of the union of an organisation in search of a leader and a leader looking for an organisation. That was the beginning of the RSS politics by proxy or remote control. The stratagem has helped it to conceal its political intentions, on the one hand, and to confuse its opponents on the other.

After the death of Dr. Mookherjee the party was completely taken over by the RSS cadres who dominated its infrastructure, obviating the need to show its naked face in the political arena. The BJS meanwhile provided effective cover for all manoeuvres of the RSS to infiltrate into various walks of nation's life without encountering any handicap that comes in the way of a political party. Controversies have however arisen whenever BJS tried to infiltrate and dominate other political parties by way of coalition tactics.

The RSS has boosted the fortunes of its political progeny by building for it a Hindu vote bank by sharpening communal cleavage between religious communities which was sought to be bridged by Nehru government after Partition. Serious notice of the RSS activities was taken for the first time when in 1961 communal violence flared up in some areas of Madhya Pradesh. A fact finding committee (set up by the Congress) headed by A.P. Jain came up with the recommendation that to prevent recurrence of such unfortunate happenings the RSS should be banned. No action was taken in view of the imminent general elections; the government did not want to give an impression that it was trying to give the ruling Congress Party undue advantage in the electoral battle.

Tension on India-China border, influx of refugees from the then East Pakistan, death of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indo-Pak war followed in quick succession after the 1962 elections. These developments pushed the question of action on Jain recommendations to the background. That gave it the opportunity to expand its organisation and influence. Golwalkar appeared prominently in the anti-China agitation and made all the anti-Nehru forces to take note of the RSS as a possible instrument for fighting the Congress.

The American establishment had sponsored a study of this organisation, probably as part of the global exercise to identify elements and organisations which could be useful for its global strategy in the Cold War that had broken out in the aftermath of

World War II. The report was positive but the study was not published. The reason for keeping it confined to private circulation can only be guessed. The role of Golwalkar and the RSS in subsequent years proved the correctness of that study though it is hardly ever noticed by political players and commentators.

At the juncture of transition to the third millennium the political party, sponsored by it, is poised to become the alternative to the party that led India to freedom and ruled for nearly a half century of independence. How Indian polity shapes in the coming years will depend, to no small measure, on the role that the RSS plays. Indeed the future of the BJP itself hinges on that. For students and observers of Indian politics, therefore, it is necessary to understand it.

The present book, a revised and enlarged version of my book published in 1979 (now out of print), is an exercise towards introducing the public at large about the origin, history and practice(s) of the RSS. Reliance for basic data has been placed mostly on publications issued by the Sangh Pariwar. It is hoped that the attempt would help better understanding of the organisation and evolution of healthier polity.

D. R. Goyal

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Chapter-I

BJP's Rajguru

R*ajguru* is a concept dating back to the age of mythology. Its nearest contemporary equivalent can be 'think-tank' although it neither conveys the same meaning nor inspires the same response of awe and wonder. No think-tank in the world today can claim divine sanction behind it like Vashisht or Vishwamitra are invested with in the Ramayana. Their verdict on the duties of the ruler, the *raj-dharma*, had to be unquestioningly accepted and carried out by the ruler. If governance fell short of responsibility, in meeting challenge of an invading enemy or in helping people face natural or man-made calamities, the ruler *(raja)* was held responsible and not the *rajguru* (his mentor). The latter was beyond reproach, beyond human frailty. Punishment for the inadequacy or misdemeanour of the ruler was not administered by the people who suffered, as happens in a democratic polity but by the *rajguru* (or his associate) in the form of a divine curse. It was thus an institution above the ruler *(raja)* who, in turn, stood above the ruled *(praja)*. A force standing between earth and heaven, negotiating with heavenly beings the fate of the denizens of a particular territory.

Such an institution has no place anywhere today except in autocratic theocracies where the rulers wield authority supposedly derived from some power above the humanity over which they rule. India, the largest democracy in the world today, has the unique distinction (if the phenomenon could be so called) of having a party—the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP— which proudly claims to have a *rajguru* and yet enjoys the right of acquiring power to govern the country.

The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) has been described as the *rajguru* not by any of its detractors but by one of its ardent followers, K.R. Malkani who edited the RSS mouthpiece, *Organiser,* for nearly half a century. Malkani, now a member of the Rajya Sabha is currently a BJP member of the Rajya Sabha and is considered to be the most authentic voice of the RSS. Distinguishing it from the other parties in the country's political life he wrote:

> "Fact is that RSS is not political. It is, if I may coin a word, meta-political. It is not interested in power as such but it is very much interested in the factors and forces that go into the making of a country's politics. It is interested in the people and their character, in our culture and its integrity, in the country and its unity and strength, but stands above and beyond politics, like some kind of an institutional Rajguru".*

What is the meaning of 'meta-political'? What are the implications of the RSS standing 'above and beyond politics'? It is important to understand the nature and character of this organisation because it has been seen to guide and control the party (BJP) which has been the largest party in the Indian Parliament since 1996, the leader of the ruling alliance between March 1998 and April 1999 and has again won the mandate in the recently held elections in September-October 1999.

L.K. Advani, presently the Home Minister and the most important leader of the BJP, likes to proudly present his party as 'a party with a difference'. Experience has shown that the conduct and behaviour of the party and its members has not been very different from other players in the political field.

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* *Organiser*, April 8, 1979.

In matters of low intrigue, vaulting ambition, unprincipled compromises, corruption of all variety and breaking promises to people the BJP has not proved to be any different from other parties. Rather it seems to have surpassed them all in those respects. Even more in respect of camouflaging its intentions through sheer demagogy; the BJP can claim to have the the most well oiled and well-managed propaganda machinery at its disposal.

The description of Malkani implies that politics is all about pursuit of power for its own sake and all political parties and persons are in the business of acquiring and wielding power for enjoying the fruits thereof. But can an organisation 'very much interested in factors and forces that go into the making of a country's politics' be disinterested in determining who comes up in the game of politics and will its political preference be altogether motiveless? Such a phenomenon can exist in imagination, in fiction or in mythology. In practical life it only means that the organisation would prefer remote control that helps exercise of power without owning responsibility as happens in democracy.

Politics may sometimes degenerate to justify the cynical view of it held by Malkani but it is not the essence of it. Not in India where politics has been guided by Gandhi who adopted politics as a means to serve humanity. Apologists of the RSS often compare the relationship of Gandhi with Congress as justification for its supra-party position. Gandhi wielded enormous influence over the Congress even though he had relinquished even its primary membership, they say and argue: "If Gandhi's position was acceptable what is wrong with the influence of the RSS over a party prepared to accept its diktat".

It is total distortion of the position. In the first place Gandhi had not created the Congress as an instrument of achieving his own aims or goals. He had accepted the aims and object of the Congress—struggling for the human right of all the Indian people by uniting them on the basis of certain principles. What he influenced was the methodology of struggle, not through armed insurrection or violent agitation or through compromise with unjust and oppressive imperialist administration in return for concessions, the then prevailing modes of struggle of the extremists and the moderates. Through gruelling discussions backed by practical demonstration he brought the Congress round to accepting his proposed strategy of non-violent civil disobedience or *satyagraha* and non-cooperation backed by a wide-ranging programme of social reconstruction including communal harmony, annihilation of hierarchical caste distinction, rural upliftment, women's emancipation et al. There is ample evidence to prove that he never demanded or even appreciated unquestioning loyalty or obedience and never hesitated to confess his mistake or incorrect understanding. That is why the best minds of his time heard him with respect. That is why his message of integral unity of means and ends echoes around the globe as the most relevant to the well-being of mankind.

It is not so with the RSS. Had its founder(s) been able to convince any of the existing political organisations of its aims and methods they would not have launched a separate project. Even where the ideological difference did not exist, with the Hindu Mahasabha for example, it did not agree with its method, the method of garnering public support through open public debate. Unlike Gandhi, the RSS does not submit itself to the scrutiny either of the party it controls or of the public at large. According to Madhu Limaye it enjoys a sort of 'supra-party' status. R.L. Nigam, a socialist leader, objected to the method of the RSS as a harbinger of authoritarianism. In an article published by the weekly *Radical Humanist**, he wrote:

> "RSS certainly has a right to its view and to its programme. That is not denied. What is being objected to

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* Republished as a pamphlet by the All India Sampardayikta Virodhi Committee.

> is its method, which is far from straight. Let RSS frankly come forward as a political party with its own ideology and programme, play the game according to the rules. What I find obnoxious is its practice of trotting political Trojan Horses while all the time proclaiming to be only a cultural organisation".

Leaders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh insist that it is a purely cultural organisation and has nothing to do with politics. How far is this claim true?

If one looks at the speeches they make and the activities they indulge in, it is not possible to agree with them. They have an ideology, which is nothing if not political. The workers of the RSS have been working only for the Jana Sangh, and after that for the BJP, although its leaders continue to sell the myth that they were free to join any political party. In fact, Jana Sangh (or BJP) and the RSS are interchangeable terms if one sees the workers and members of the two. The only difference is that some people who for some reasons cannot participate in open political activity work through the RSS alone while others are common to both.

The RSS is an organisation which has definite political aims but it does not consider the normal democratic processes fit for achieving those aims. It is no canard, for Golwalkar had himself declared in so many words that democracy and democratic processes have no meaning for him. On page 18 of his book, *Bunch of Thoughts,* he wrote:

> "The concept of Democracy as being 'by the people' and 'of the people' meaning that all are equal sharers in the political administration, is to a very large extent only a myth in practice."

About the democratic mode of functioning he said: "The system... breeds two evils--self-praise and vilification of others--that poison the peace and tranquility of human mind and disrupt the mutual harmony of individual in society."

This is a peculiar instance of self-projection, Golwalkar saw others in his own image. If self-praise and vilification of others were the only two features of democracy, then Guru Golwalkar would be the greatest democrat in India. He considered Gandhi and Nehru as traitors and the whole national movement a perversity of minds because of which the Hindus got 'defeated' in 1947. Indian political parties are mere imitation of the West and the whole West is stinking with materialism. He was the only hope of Hindu regeneration and, through the force of Hindudom, the hope of humanity. A little further we shall give relevant quotations to prove that this view about Golwalkar is no imaginary creation of my imagination but the very essence of his thought and action.

On behalf of the RSS it is claimed that it is not a political but a cultural organisation, a civilising force. Now culture and civilisation, whether religious or secular, are universal not confined to any particular territorial entity or race. Contrarily the RSS insists on its territoriality denying, unlike Gandhi, essential oneness of all religions wherever born. The BJP today, seeks to deny the right to equality of citizenship to citizens born outside India by proposing to change the Constitution to declare such individuals unfit for the three highest positions in the State structure.

It is significant to note that the RSS ideologue Golwalkar had high praise for racist practice of Nazis. If participation in democratic activities for the administration and development of the nation is political activity, then certainly the RSS is not a political party. And if Hitler's fascism was pure cultural activity, it is a purely cultural organisation. For, that seems to be the only model they want to emulate. This is what Golwalkar wrote in his book, *We: Our Nationhood Defined,* which was first published in 1939.

> "German race-pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semantic races--the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and Cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by."

This was in the year 1939 when Hitler had plunged the world into the flames of war, when the whole humanity, with the exception of Hitler's paid fifth columnists abroad, were unanimous in their condemnation of Nazi Germany. I can not say whether the RSS and its Guruji were paid by Hitler or his agents. But that they get inspiration from him is unmistakable. Also unmistakable is the tendency to emulate Hitler's heirs. Is not the attitude of RSS towards Pakistan the same as of revenge-seeking neo-Nazis of Germany today?

So, that is the type of cultural organisation that RSS is. Call it cultural or political, it was this character of the organisation that had compelled the Government of India in 1948 to declare it unlawful. The resolution stated that the step had been taken with determination "to root out the forces of hate and violence that are at work in our country and imperil the freedom of the Nation and darken her fair name."

Way back in 1948 Govind Sahay, a Congress leader and parliamentary secretary in the U.P. government had written a booklet on the basis of his study of the RSS technique. In that he compares its technique with that of the Nazi Party. It is not just the technique but the whole approach that reminds one of fascists.

A peculiar feature of the RSS organisation is that it rarely appears in public and hardly ever does it function in its own name. The RSS is only a breeding ground for cadres who carry its ideas and attitudes in different fields of life through various specially set up front organisations. The RSS does not draw its cadres from fronts; it only provides cadres who act as conveyers of ideas and controllers of the fronts on behalf of the parent organisation.

The need for this modus operandi was felt only after Independence when the RSS got exposed after Gandhi's murder. Its leaders and mentors then realised that it was not possible for them to infiltrate into other political, economic and social organisations. The Congress, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, had become vigilant about them and barred the entry of the RSS into its ranks.

After the ban on RSS was lifted in 1949, the leadership calculatedly embarked upon forming a network of front organisations which could serve as the cover for infiltration of the RSS thinking and cadres in various spheres of life and sections of people.

Various front organisations in practically every field of life were floated under innocuous names. The fields covered are schools and college managements, student unions, labour unions, news agencies and religious organisations etc.

One of the basic features of fascism is revivalist attitude eulogising one identifiable group e.g., one race, one religion or one community.

To sustain this attitude a hate complex is to be developed against another identifiable group or groups. In Germany, Hitler tried to exploit the sentiments of the German nation by treating the Aryan race as superior and denigrating the Jews as an object of hatred.

> "We had brought into the actual life almost everything that was beneficial to mankind. Then the rest of humanity was just a biped and so no distinctive name was given to us. Sometimes in trying to distinguish our people from others, we were called the enlightened, the Aryas and the rest, the Mlechhas".*

The RSS is fed on the myth that the Hindus alone are the true sons of the soil and Hindu culture is the only symbol of Indian nationhood. By a sleight of hand, Mr. Golwalkar identifies India with the Hindu people. He preaches the doctrine that this great country of ours is one natural unit.

This type of fascist image-building needs an object of hatred; the minimum that could be called for was to deride such object as culturally inferior. The RSS as an organisation has been indulging in the dirty game of slander and calumny against all non-Hindus living in India. On the foundation of this hatred, the Sangh tries to build up a cadre saturated with the poison of communalism. The philosophy of RSS in relation to non-Hindus is that:

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* *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 46-47.

1. They are inferior as a race.
2. They are only aliens or invaders.
3. They should lose identity by conversion or merger in Hindu culture.

The corollary to the above is that non-Hindus could not be trusted or relied upon until they submerged themselves in Hindu community's way of life.

About minorities Mr. Golwalkar says, "In fact we are Hindus even before we emerge from the womb of our mothers. We are, therefore, born as Hindus. About the others they are born to this world as simple unnamed human beings and later on, either circumcised or baptised, they become Muslims or Christians".*

According to RSS all the inhabitants of this country professing any non-Hindu faith are enemies of this country. The RSS laments that the Muslims do not celebrate Hindu festivals and do not worship Hindu gods. The RSS believes that with the change of faith the love for the country or the nation disappears.

Deep hatred of Muslim community runs through the entire ideology of the RSS. Mr. Golwalkar says, "Their (Muslims') history of the past one thousand two hundred years, full of incidents of destruction, depredation and all sorts of barbaric atrocities, is there before our eyes. The present day large Muslim population in our country is one of the results of the fatal devastation that they wrought all over the land. Not only the broken monuments but these pieces of a broken society also are equally an evidence of their vandalism. What has our good behaviour towards the Muslim faith and the Muslim people brought us? Nothing but desecration of our holy places and enslavement of our people".**

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* *Ibid*, p. 119.

** *Ibid*, pp. 294-95

The RSS has been hammering the idea that Pakistan was created as a homeland for Muslims and every Muslim residing today in India should have migrated to the newly created state. According to the Sangh all the Muslims who have opted to stay behind owe their loyalty to Pakistan and are enemies of the homeland. For RSS, "wherever there is a masjid or Muslim Mohalla, the Muslims feel that it is their own independent territory". RSS declares, "All such pockets are so many miniature Pakistans".*

In an article in *Organiser,* dated 9.7.1962, the paper quotes a speech of Eknath Ranade, another top leader of the RSS, as saying, "These converts to Islam and Christianity not only changed their mode of worship but they turned their back on all that was indigenous-the history of the land, the culture of the land, the tradition of this land."

Surprisingly enough these efforts at denigration are extended even to Jainism and Buddhism: "So far as Jainism and Buddhism are concerned they have never made any contribution to social and political thought as such, we have not inherited any *arthashastras* (politics and economics) or *dharmashastras* (social law) from them. All we have from them are the various mokshashastras pertaining to the supreme salvation of the individual soul".**

This anti-Muslim attitude of the RSS goes to the extent of dubbing even Urdu language as a foreign language though historically, the birth place of Urdu is India and the greatest number of Urdu speaking people are found in this country.

The above facts very clearly indicate that RSS believes in Hindu hegemony over all other minorities. The solution that the RSS presents for upgrading the status of minorities is that they should live here claiming no citizenship right. Either they convert to Hinduism or claim nothing.

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* *Ibid,* pp. 127-28.

** *Organiser,* June 10, 1963.

Chapter-II

The Cult and the Culture

When the controversy about relationship between the Janata Party and the RSS was at its peak in 1978-79 a journalist friend asked me: "Do you think Atal Bihari Vajpayee will stick with the RSS? ' After becoming the Minister for External Affairs he had repeatedly asserted that he would continue the Nehru policy of non-alignment and that it had never been an election issue. He had gone to Pakistan and tried to make friends, reciting Urdu poetry in a surprisingly chaste accent. He had even talked of continuing the friendliest of relations with the Arab countries and had made no move to extend full recognition to Israel. He had played host at his residence to Urdu poets, many of them Muslims, and had served them Kashmiri style non-vegetarian delicacies and the guests had been impressed not only by the culinary art but also by the courtesy and politeness of the man. "He appears to be an independent liberal and, for all I know, acts according to his own conscience and not on the dictates of anybody", said this friend.

"There is no question of estrangement between the RSS and Vajpayee. All this is being done with perfect understanding. What would the RSS lose if a few gestures of Vajpayee can wash the stigma of communalism? There can be no better public relations man for the Sangh," I replied.

I also said that it would be wrong to draw a conclusion from Vajpayee's behaviour that the Sangh had got revolutionised by the impact of power. And I informed him about how he had given explanation for his behaviour in a meeting of shakha-men held at the RSS office at Jhandewalan, New Delhi. Top RSS officers working in the capital had come together and a volley of questions had been showered on the External Affairs Minister who had just returned from his Pakistan visit. Without so much as batting an eyelid, Vajpayee told them: "We should not worry over much about these things and certainly not give any public reaction. Let us not forget that the government in New Delhi is still dominated by the old guard, most of whom were Nehru's colleagues. It is not our government yet that we should press for fundamental policy changes in accordance with our thinking. We have to work hard to create conditions which may bring about a total change of guard."*

It was not the first time that such a question had cropped up in innocent minds about the character and conduct of Vajpayee. Earlier in late sixties when Balraj Madhok, the then most prominent leader of the Jana Sangh had tried to free the political party from the organisational grip of the RSS, Vajpayee was known to share Madhok's views. Under Madhok's presidentship the party had for the first time, after the death of Dr. S.P. Mookerjee, emerged as a significant political force. And yet he was not tolerated when he tried to tug at the RSS leash. Vajpayee did not defend him when the process of throwing Madhok out was set in motion.

In the late seventies and early eighties when the RSS connection became a matter of dispute in the Janata Party he was inclined to accept the proposal for severing relationship with the RSS and diluting the Hindutva ideology; he even wrote an article in the *Indian Express* advising the RSS to keep off politics. But when the

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* These are not his exact words because there is no written record. No minutes of discussion at such meetings are kept in the RSS. I got the report from one who attended but the name cannot be disclosed for obvious reasons.

RSS issued the diktat that those associated with the Sangh should quit the Janata Party, he led the Jana Sangh contingent out and agreed to head the new political outfit under the name and style of Bharatiya Janata Party. The only concession made to Vajpayee was to declare the aims and objects of the new party couched in phraseology which should give it the look of something different from the standard Sangh pronouncements. When it was found that even cosmetic change was so irksome to hard-core swayamsewaks that their ardour for the political party abated, the party returned to what was called its Jana Sangh moorings. In other words the old Hindutva motif was revived and there was no murmur from Vajpayee.

In 1991 when the BJP approved the Ram Rath yatra project of L.K. Advani he raised a mild objection saying that the *vanar sena* accompanying the *rath* could create political problems, his voice went unheard. On the other hand when a year later he called the criminal demolition of Babri Masjid 'unfortunate' a veritable storm broke out in the Sangh circles; many swayamsewaks called him a Congress clone. He quietly swallowed all the insults.

Vajpayee has indeed accepted for himself the role which was crudely spelt out by Govindacharya as 'mukhauta' (mask). That the expression was used during Govindacharya's conversation with a foreign diplomat was quite a humiliation and could have damaged the image of Vajpayee so irretrievably as to even render him useless for the task assigned to him. Vajpayee therefore publicly protested but remained satisfied when Govindacharya said that what he meant by his description was 'crown' not mask.

Why is it that a person like Vajpayee so meekly submits himself to the dictates of the RSS. A recent example of that was seen when he was forced to drop his proposal to give financial portfolio to Jaswant Singh. Such a behavious, accepting the fate of an agency outside the party and Parliament was unthinkable on the case of another Prime Minister. Jawaharlal Nehru refused to accept any diktat from Congress President Kripalani. Nobody could force Morarji Desai to so change his opinion. Even the mild and meek P.V. Narasimha Rao defended the dignity of Prime Minister by not kow-towing to Sonia Gandhi who had virtually gifted him the position. In the case of the RSS it is important to keep in mind that a man who has once been through the drill of shakha cannot either defy or quit unless he is thrown out as happened with Balraj Madhok. Once a man gets used to the RSS routine or shakha he gets entangled like a fly in a spider's web. The whole organisation is modelled on esoteric cults whose members are inextricably attached to the head of the Cult and surrender to him their will and reason.

To understand the RSS, more important than its words or pronouncements is the mystique of shakha. The Sangh is a web of shakhas spread through out the length and breadth of the country with a few threads extending to foreign lands where the Hindus, both Indian and non-Indian citizens, live and work. And according to the RSS leaders themselves the shakha is the key to all their work. In his last speech before he died Golwalkar particularly emphasised the importance of the daily shakha saying: "We will not succeed in the different types of work undertaken by us, without the shakhas." He further underlined the point by asserting that "wherever there is an efficient shakha we can positively succeed in whatever we undertake".* The policies or pronouncements have no significance in understanding the Sangh as compared to the shakha, the system of organisation. In fact, when a swayamsewak is asked about the aim of the Sangh the one word answer is 'sangathan' (organisation).

What is a shakha and what happens there? Shakha is the basic unit, the corner-stone of the RSS edifice. Here is its description in Golwalkar's own words:

> "There is an open playground. Under a saffron flag groups of youths and boys are absorbed in a variety of Bharatiya games. Resounding shouts of joyous enthusiasm often fill the air. The sight of daring young men pressing forward with the cry 'Kabaddi, Kabaddi' on their lips thrills

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* Published in the daily *Motherland*, July 22, 1973.

> the heart. The leader's whistle or order has a magical effect on them; there is instant perfect order and silence. Then exercises follow--wielding the lathi, Suryanamaskar, marching etc. The spirit of collective effort and spontaneous discipline pervades every programme. Then they sit down and sing in a chorus a song charged with patriotism. Discussions follow. They delve deep into the problems affecting the national life. And finally, they stand in rows before the flag and recite the prayer: नमस्ते सदा वत्सले मातृभुमे ! (Many salutations to Thee, O Loving Motherland !) whose echoes fill the air and stir the soul. 'Bharat Mata ki jai' uttered in utmost earnest furnishes the finishing and inspiring touch to the entire programme."*

This description is repeated in all the publications issued by the RSS and the scene is eulogised as 'inspiring' and 'soul-stirring'. For the outsiders this is the only perception of the Sangh which is why the popular image of the RSS is that of a physical exercise club for the admirers and a 'para-military outfit' for those who disparage it. It is, however, much more than a physical routine. It must be understood that it is a psychological drill leading to total surrender of the individual personality to what the RSS establishment prefers to describe as 'the ideal'.

A story often related by Golwalkar himself throws a flood of light on this process:

> "A rich man used to go to his beautiful garden in the afternoon to sit in its cool shade. One day a peacock came and sat on a tree spreading its charming feathers. The owner thought, 'How nice would it be if it comes daily at this hour'! He prepared some eatables mixed with a trace of opium and threw them before the peacock. The peacock ate them and felt elated. Next day also, the peacock came remembering that sensation of happiness and the man fed it with another dose of opium. Ultimately the bird was so

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* Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts,* pp. 333-34.

habituated that it used to come regularly at that hour even without that opium."*

It is the time honoured technique of habit formation or culturisation, 'the process of imprinting permanent *samskars'*. Conceptually, according to Golwalkar, the technique comprises "three factors--firstly, constant meditation of ideal that is to be formed into a *samskar,* secondly, constant company of persons devoted to the same ideal and finally, engaging the body in activities congenial to that ideal".**

Significantly enough the founder of the RSS started the shakha with boys of 12-15 age-group and the practice to 'catch 'em young' has continued after him. The RSS has never tried the tedious and bothersome process of convincing people through argument. 'Leave alone the ones who have their minds already crammed with well-formed opinions', the Sangh workers are told, 'and concentrate on clean slates'. The emphasis is on getting more and more *bal* swayamsewaks. They, the children and teenagers, are attracted by the prospect of playing games and the thrill of wearing a uniform. Once entrapped they get more lollipops in the form of songs and stories.

There is a social reason for this attachment to the shakha. Belonging to a group provides a peculiar self-confidence which explains why the shakhas are popular in urbanised areas where the middle class is gripped by a demoralising sense of loneliness and alienation; the Sangh has seldom had much attraction for the rural population where the people are well integrated and at home with their surroundings. In cities and towns also those who take to the shakha are mostly the ones who, for some reason or other, feel insecure in their surroundings and crave for the protective umbrella of a group or a god. *The Sangh provides both.* Rarely do we see boys who are active in the playgrounds or other social-cultural activities (like debates, dramas, clubs) going to the RSS shakha. If ever such a person does stray into it he drops out rather quickly.

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* *Ibid.* p. 348.

** *Ibid.* p. 350.

Almost all the RSS drop-outs that I have met--and the number is fairly large--belong to that category.

Those who get addicted and stay on are provided the titillating sensation of having been initiated into an exclusive group; the oath ceremony serves to deepen the illusion. Daily contact with officers of the Sangh, the respectful manner of mutual address, common living in outings and short and long duration camps--all these programmes act as the various strings which bind the emotional youth to the shakha. A willing suspension of disbelief thus secured, the boys are subjected to a process of indoctrination. At least once a week in each shakha there is a lecture called 'boudhik'. These lectures, even from the highest, are profusely illustrated with stories from history and the *Puranas*. There are no conceptual ambiguities and no philosophical intricacies; it is a simple, straight assault on the reasoning faculty through emotions. The speakers avoid, rather carefully, serious discussion or analysis of any problem--contemporary or past--of history, philosophy, economy, politics or social life. No noble doubts, only fiery assertions.

The total thought content of the RSS can be summed up as follows: 'Hindus have lived in India since times immemorial; Hindus are the nation because all culture, civilisation and life is contributed by them alone; non-Hindus are invaders or guests and cannot be treated as equal unless they adopt Hindu traditions, culture etc.; the non-Hindus, particularly Muslims and Christians, have been enemies of everything Hindu and are, therefore, to be treated as threats; the freedom and progress of this country is the freedom and progress of the Hindus; the history of India is the history of the struggle of the Hindus for protection and preservation of their religion and culture against the onslaughts of these aliens; the threat continues because the power is in the hands of those who do not believe in this nation being a Hindu Nation; those who talk of national unity as the unity of all those who live in this country are motivated by the selfish desire of cornering minority votes and are therefore traitors; the unity and consolidation of the Hindus is the dire need of the hour because the Hindu people are surrounded on all sides by enemies; the Hindus must develop the capacity for massive retaliation and offensive is the best defence; lack of unity is the root cause of all the troubles of the Hindus and the Sangh is born with the divine mission to bring about that unity.'

Without any fear of contradiction it can be stated that nothing more than this has been said in the RSS shakhas during the past 74 years of its existence. Every year the Sar Sangh chalak prepares a lecture on some components of this basic argument couching it in the current political vocabulary and that speech is repeated by him at all the places he visits during his countrywide tour. The same theme, and more or less the same style of presentation, is picked up by the provincial organisers and those entrusted with the task of intellectual training at various other levels. Attempt is also made to din these ideas into the minds of swayamsewaks through a kind of catechism, *charcha* they call it, where all these ideas are repeated through one line questions and answers. The songs and stories, which ordinarily would seem to provide amusement, are really the cement and mortar to stick these ideas in the mind. They also act as garnishing to make the dish more attractive. The whole being of a swayamsewak is thus rolled into the wrappings and trappings of this set of ideas which goes by the name of noble Hindu ideal in the RSS diction. It naturally has an opiate effect on the mind which is rendered insensitive to variety, nuance, suggestion or alternative thought. In a word, fanaticism takes control of his reason.

All this has a peculiar attraction for a mind desirous of assertion in social life but reluctant or incapable of encountering its complexities and intricacies. We have the testimony for this of K.R. Malkani; explaining the attraction of the RSS for young men, he wrote:

> "The weekly *baudhiks (talks)* introduced the swayamsewaks to history and culture, literature and religion. The RSS had a clear-cut, consistent and complete philosophy that lighted up many dark corners of the mind and explained things not clear till then. A certain certitude filled his mind. This was tonic for the soul. The Gita says:

> *'Sanshyatma Vinashyate'*, persons full of doubt, get destroyed. And here in the RSS there were no Doubting Thomases."*

Those who tried to render the RSS toothless and venomless by binding it down to a written constitution were mistaken because the process of indoctrination remains unaffected by whatever is written therein. Many people may be surprised to know--but it is a fact--that 99 per cent of those who regularly attend shakha do not know that there is anything like a constitution which governs the organisation, what to speak of asserting the right to canvass support, cast vote or be elected to any position. Which of the office-bearers have been elected and when, are irrelevant questions because the whole thing is based on faith. The Constitution** should be treated as a document of minor academic value for understanding the Sangh, in fact only to emphasise its irrelevance.

The real structural model is not the modern democratic structure followed by various social or cultural organisations but something else. For that let us turn to Golwalkar who while describing the Sangh technique said:

> "Without a suitable technique no ideal, however great, can be realised. Even in our various sects, each individual has a definite emblem in keeping with his particular sect. He dresses and adorns himself in a particular manner, recites a particular *mantra* and follows a particular code of discipline. A Shaiva, a Shakta or a Vaishnava, each has his own method of worship, his own ritual, his own codes and conventions regulating his life. We too have evolved a technique, an emblem, a *'mantra'* and a code of discipline in keeping with our ideal of an unified and disciplined national life."***

The *mantra* in the case of the RSS is Hindu sangathan, the emblem is Bhagwa Dhwaj (which is treated as guru) and the code of discipline is the paraphernalia of daily shakha with its variety of rituals. The uniform and the lathi stick serve for the distinctive dress and adornment. And like all religious sects the Sangh has its own festivals too. These festivals--some of them of a purely political nature and others capable of being put to such use--mark out the division of time for the swayamsewak. There are six of them and they occur roughly every alternate month:

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* *Organiser,* April 8, 1979.

** See Appendix V.

*** Golwalkar, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

Vijayadashami (around October) is considered the most important and observed as the day of weapon worship. Shakhas bring out route marches and there is public display of physical prowess. While preparing for the celebrations the swayamsewaks are told that the occasion marks the day when brave heroes of yore used to launch their campaigns of conquest and that tradition we have to revive. Then comes in mid-January the Makar-Sankraman. "This festival", according to an official publication, "is observed in the country under various names. The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh seeks to foster the feeling of integral nationalism on the basis of mutual sense of oneness. For that reason also this festival has been included among the Sangh festivals because it promotes social life based on love and affection".* The Varsh Pratipada, which is observed on April 1 every year, is connected in the RSS mind with the starting of the new calendar by Yudhishthira, Vikramaditya and Shaliwahan as also with the coronation of Rama. The added significance for the Sangh is that the birthday of its founder coincides with it. In May end is observed the Hindu Samrajya Dinotsava to commemorate the coronation of Shivaji which is supposed to be the first proclamation of the founding of the Hindu empire. In August comes Raksha Bandhan which occasion is used to remind the swayamsewaks of 'the commitment to be prepared to make supreme sacrifice to protect the honour of Hindu society'. And the year is rounded off with Vyas Pooja or Guru Poornima when the swayamsewaks worship the Bhagwa Dhwaj and make offerings of money. These anonymous offerings constitute the fund of the RSS.

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* *Hamare Utsav* (Hindi), p. 15. This booklet contains detailed description of why and how the festivals are celebrated.

The basic thing to be noted is that all the festivals are invested with what in common parlance would be called political significance. The treatment and use of festivals symbolises in the RSS practice of covering the cake of politics with the icing of religion and culture. They have adopted the form of religious cults to promote a definite variety of politics.

Before we come to their political operations some other aspects of its organisational form should be taken note of. In the early stages the prayer and the pledge proclaimed the adherence of the Sangh to the sanyasi cult of Samarth Ramdas, the guru of Shivaji, which helped the Maratha warrior a great deal in his war against the Mughal emperor. That was perhaps the chief reason for the impression that the Sangh was trying to revive the Maratha empire. But the emphasis was more on Ramdas than on Shivaji. In the shakhas the story is repeatedly told that after victory Shivaji had placed his sceptre and crown at the feet of Ramdas who commanded him to rule on his behalf. It may have been a matter of expediency for Shivaji who was constrained to propitiate the Brahmins; but for RSS it provides the model of its relationship with politics; the political power must bow before the Sangh. If at all the Sangh seeks to revive an empire it is not of Shivaji but of the Peshwas who called themselves the descendants of the guru, of the true blue blood.

The fund collection is another peculiar feature. Like membership, it is in the style of religious cults or mafia. There is no record, no registers and no receipts. Not only is it difficult to find out whether a certain person is a member of the RSS or not, it is also not possible to know who has paid how much and what is the total collection. Recently a system has been introduced whereby the swayamsewaks of a shakha inform the *karyavah* (secretary) of the respective amounts donated but that too does not make the contribution public. It remains an exclusively private affair; some thing between the preceptor and the disciple. The system has given rise to many malpractices within the organisation. Above all, it creates grave suspicion that large sums of doubtful origin and character are being absorbed without any possibility of detection. The total amount collected all over India is counted and declared at the central level only and from there disbursements are made for meeting expenses at lower levels.

In line with the model of the religious cult the nomenclature for an RSS organiser is *pracharak.* This institution is the lynch-pin of the entire structure. The *pracharak* is a person who has volunteered to undertake full-time work, and therefore has vowed not to marry nor lead the life of a householder. There are only a few exceptional cases of married men being accepted for the job. A slight modification was introduced by Deoras because of complaints against such whole-timers (see Chapter-V). The *pracharaks* are selected, approved, appointed, transferred and controlled by the Sar Karyavah (the General Secretary) through the Prachar Pramukh (the Chief Organiser). Important *pracharaks* are generally young men who have gone through the rigorous training in three successive courses called the Officers Training Camps (OTCs). The *pracharak* is not elected but selected and is responsible only to the higher level *pracharak*, not to the local shakha officers who are not full-time workers of the Sangh. His word carries the final authority unless, in special circumstances, there is a revolt in which case he is transferred to some other place. Such occasions are very rare and complaints against pracharaks are generally not heeded by higher authorities.

In this context the report of Hemendra Nath Pandit is very significant. He had once sent a letter to Golwalkar containing serious charges against the *pracharaks* in West Bengal. We quote here only one paragraph of his long letter:

> "To crown all, serious charges have been levelled against some pracharaks of bad moral character. Vices concerning women are alleged. Even more serious are allegations of unnatural sex crimes of which juvenile swayamsewak have been the victims. I know personally that one pracharak tried to make money for himself out of a transaction in connection with the *Swastika* (the Bengali weekly organ of the Sangh in West Bengal). Other

> allegations of misappropriation of funds have also been heard. Even the provincial organisation has rendered its position precarious by making itself open to the charge of dishonestly appropriating and misusing the funds of the Bastuhra Sahayata Samiti.* The Purvanchal pracharak has been taking trips by air of which the expenses are being borne by the above Samiti. One typewriter has been bought at a cost of Rs. 1100, one camera for Rs. 1000 and one microphone for Rs. 2000."**

The effect of that report, according to Pandit, was almost nil:

> "The net results were: (1) No reply to my complaints on any of the above counts -- neither regret nor any feeling of surprise or anxiety; (2) The Mahratti pracharak who was the centre of the corrupt and selfish clique that had spoiled many teen-aged boys (many more had left because of him), was retained in Calcutta with his family brought over and a monthly allowance sanctioned for their maintenance; (3) The provincial office was alerted with information about my complaints and advised to keep closer contact with me."***

A detailed understanding of the *pracharak* system is very important; the lines of *pracharaks* act as the motor and sensory nerves of the central authority controlling the whole body. Whenever a new organisation is to be set up a suitable pracharak is detailed for it with a specific assurance from the non-RSS promoters that his actions would be judged by the parent organisation and by nobody else. Even within the RSS the *pracharak* at every level, except at the top, is the most important functionary, the most authoritative expression of the ideal, whose word is law for others.

The similarity of nomenclature between Sar Sangh chalak and the Sangh chalaks at provincial and other levels is deceptive and causes confusion to outsiders. Whereas the former is the real lord and master of the entire network (his nominal constitutional position as only 'the friend, philosopher and guide' notwithstanding) the others are just ornamental figureheads with no real authority even though the constitution gives all the authority in their hands. The Sar Sangh chalak is nominated by his predecessor and not subject to change while the other Sangh chalaks are discovered by the *pracharaks* and are subject to change through election which is a mere formality because the electors generally owe unflinching loyalty to the *pracharak* who recommends the person to be elected. If we carry the analogy of the biological system further the relationship between the Sar Sangh chalak and the *pracharaks* is the same as between the nerve centre and the nerves, the non-pracharaks acting as subsidiary organs.

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* The Samiti is an organisation founded by the RSS for giving relief to East Bengal refugees. It is manned almost exclusively by elderly swayamsewaks.

** Hemendra Nath, Pandit, *End of a Dream.* pp. 4-5.

*** *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

As a result of the mental and physical drilling that the swayamsewaks go through a deep sense of loyalty grows in them towards the *pracharak*. It is consciously fostered by the old-timers who have gone through long duration training in Officers Training Camps. The virtues of obedience are also instilled through stories like that of Ekalavya. A practice in all the Sangh meetings is to ask a question: "What will you do if you are asked by your officer (adhikari) to jump into a well'?" The answer most appreciated by the group is a prompt 'I will jump immediately'. If even the slightest hesitation is shown there is a derisive laughter from all sides. Stories are told to illustrate how those who showed unquestioning obedience accomplished glorious acts of heroism for their respective countries and how the Doubting Thomases brought disaster. Many of the games played in the shakha also are calculated to cultivate this virtue.

The recipients of all devotion, reverence and obedience are the pracharaks, mostly in accordance with their hierarchical status and this culture has a deep impact on all that the RSS does in various fields of its activity. The attachment to a central authority through a system of loyalties also explains why a swayamsewak, even if he be a Vajpayee, cannot defy or leave the RSS. In the absence of the RSS cushion he would feel like a fish out of water.

Chapter-III

Historical Background

The foundation of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) marked a leap out of the mainstream of the national struggle for independence. It was a big leap though not forward. It was a turning back, a somewhat romantic sit-down to hark back to the memories of days gone by and brave deeds performed by characters glowing in lustrous light of mythology. The founder, Dr. K.B. Hedgewar was not a very prominent participant in the various social reform and political movements of the time. Although his followers tell us about his associations with extremists in Nagpur and Poona, the revolutionaries of the Anushilan group in Calcutta, the Tilakites in Maharashtra etc., contemporary accounts extant are silent about him. Even the officially issued RSS literature mentions no documents and details which could show that he was as colourful and distinguished a personality as he is made out to be.

The turning away is generally attributed to the supposedly big change in the country's political climate with the demise of Lokamanya Tilak and the ascendance of Gandhi. While the former, according to this point of view, was not inhibited by the fad of non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity, the latter had subordinated the cause of freedom to these principles. The argument does not quite square up with facts, too widely known to be rejected by the advocates themselves. The personalities of Tilak and Gandhi were, of course, vastly different. While the former approached religion to seek support and sustenance for his patriotic political impulse, the latter sought spiritual fulfilment in the struggle for freedom. While the Lokamanya was a populist leader prepared to take up a cause or activity only if it held the promise of advancing the date of achieving his 'birthright'* the Mahatma was essentially a spiritualist who would not have anything to do with a political action if it did not correspond to his spiritual moral sense. Despite this diversity of character the two had found common ground for action and the depth of belief and understanding made them comrades-in-arms. On the goals there was no difference and on the methods there was understanding despite absence of unanimity.

On the Hindu-Muslim question--which seems to be the main point of departure for Hedgewar--Tilak cannot be accused of advocating a Hindu Rashtra which could be undermined by Gandhian leadership. And on the issue of Khilafat he had promised to support whatever decision the Muslims arrived at. Tilak's no objection to Khilafat is significant in that while its espousal by Gandhi is berated it is not recognised that Gandhi and Tilak were in agreement with each other. The latter was as much interested in befriending the Muslim community, if the Lucknow Pact be taken as an indicator. Tilak had no aversion to using religious symbolism for mass mobilisation and had used the Ganesh Chaturthi and Shiv Jayanti festivals to mobilise the Hindu sentiment for the cause of freedom even though the expediency did not help in fostering unity and understanding at mass level. But Gandhi in this respect was no way behind, a fact which is today admitted by the Sangh people themselves. In the introduction to Golwalkar's book, *Bunch of Thoughts,* M.A. Venkata Rao writes:

> "Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi introduced a powerful leaven into this maelstrom of ideas, impulses and images having many elements congenial to the spirit of

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* 'Freedom is my birthright' was Tilak's slogan.

Indian Culture. His fasts and vows, his silences, his prayer meetings, his satyagraha--all appeared to have a family resemblance to the *tapasya* of old. The Hindu spirit dormant in the educated classes (and ordinarily submerged beneath their secular education of the Anglo-Indian colleges) rose to the surface and hailed the political leader as spiritual Mahatma of the authentic type of spiritual past. Thus the national liberation movement of M.K. Gandhi derived power from the cultural heritage indwelling in the subconscious mind of the people."*

Rao bemoans that the political motif was predominant in Gandhi. That may be partly true but this was even more true of Tilak. And yet if the RSS leadership insist on explaining the birth of the organisation in terms of the change in political culture from Tilak to Gandhi** one has to look for the motivation in something other than ideology.

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* Introduction to Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts,* p xxii. The writer seems to have been either ignorant or purposely ignored the fact that Gandhi was called Mahatma by Muslim theologians (of Firangi Mahal school) when he had espoused Khilafat.

** "The founder of the RSS, late Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, was amongst those few revolutionaries who worked for the emancipation of India from the then British Rule. In his youth and as a student in Calcutta, he came in close contact with revolutionary movements and himself was actively associated with their activities. Thereafter he was an active, constructive worker of the Indian National Congress. However, after actually remaining in contact with the revolutionaries as well as after having participated in the Congress Movement in the year 1921, he came to the conclusion that in the disintegrated condition of the country, an organisation of the Hindus based on the feelings of brotherhood and oneness without any distinction as to sect, faith, caste, colour or creed, imbued with the patriotism, with a realisation of the greatness of their past can alone win independence for the nation. In the twenties, the political situation was fast changing and there was confusion writ large on the political scene. The concept that nation with a glorious past which indeed was a 'Hindu Rashtra' was being wiped out from the people and its interests were being ignored by the then political leaders particularly after the eclipse of Lokamanya Tilak from the political horizon after his death in 1920. The Founder of the RSS, Dr. Hedgewar, then visualised the idea of founding the RSS as a movement with a view to fearlessly propagate that India was a 'Hindu Rashtra' ('Nation'), as contra-distinguished from 'Hindu Raj'."

---*Affidavit filed in the Nagpur Court by M.D. Deoras and Rajendra Singh,* Para 8.

Hedgewar is known to have been a follower and even a beneficiary of Dr. B.S. Moonje who was one of those Maharashtrian leaders who resented the rise of Gandhi more than anything else. He felt it meant passing of the national leadership into the hands of a non-Maharashtrian non-Brahmin. Such people were carrying on a whisper campaign against Gandhi. Gandhi who felt constrained to reply to his critics of this variety set out in an article, "Confession of Faith" in *Young India,* in unambiguous terms his relations with the departed leader:

> "A strange anonymous letter has been received by me, admiring me for having taken up a cause that was dearest to Lokamanya's heart, and telling me that his spirit was residing in me and that I must prove a worthy follower of his. The letter moreover, admonishes me not to lose heart in the prosecution of the swaraj programme, and finishes off by accusing me of imposture in claiming to be politically a disciple of Gokhale. I wish the correspondents will throw off the slavish habit of writing anonymously. We who are developing the swaraj spirit must cultivate the courage of fearlessly speaking out our mind. The subject-matter of the letter, however, being of public importance, demands a reply. I cannot claim the honour of being a follower of the late Lokamanya. I admire him like the millions of his countrymen for his indomitable will, his vast learning, his love of country, and above all the purity of his private life and great sacrifice. Of all the men of modern times he captivated most the imagination of his people. He breathed into us the spirit of swaraj. No one perhaps realized the evil of the existing system of Government as Mr. Tilak did. And in all humility I claim to deliver his message to the country as truly as the best of his disciples. But I am conscious that my method is not Mr. Tilak's method. And that is why I have still difficulty with some of the Maharashtra leaders. But I sincerely think that Mr. Tilak did not disbelieve my method. I enjoyed the

> privilege of his confidence. And his last word to me in the presence of several friends was, just a fortnight before his death that mine was an excellent method if the people could be persuaded to take to it. But he said he had doubts. I know no other method; I can only hope that when the final test comes the country will be proved to have assimilated the method of non-violent non-cooperation. Nor am I unaware of my limitations. I can lay no claim to scholarship. I have not his powers of organization, I have no compact disciplined party to lead and having been an exile for twenty-three years, I cannot claim the experience that the Lokamanya had of India. Two things we had in common to the fullest measure--love of the country and the steady pursuit of swaraj. I can, therefore, assure the anonymous writer that, yielding to none in my reverence for the memory of the deceased, I will march side by side with the foremost of the Lokamanya's disciples in the pursuit of swaraj."*

Admirers and followers of the founder of the RSS would certainly feel unhappy about this conjecture which implies that Hedgewar was imbued with a strong sentiment of Maharashtrian chauvinism. We shall return to this question in a subsequent chapter but would crave the indulgence of the readers not to dismiss it out of hand unless weightier evidence for the rejection be available. In our view there are more facts favouring this hypothesis than against it.

The officially published accounts of the life of Hedgewar provide us no details of the experiences or the books he read which influenced his thinking and brought him to visualising "the idea of founding the RSS as a movement with a view to fearlessly propagate that India was a Hindu Rashtra (Nation) as contra-distinguished from Hindu Raj". The idea was certainly not in the atmosphere. The only person who was advocating it was V.D. Savarkar whose book, *Hindutva,* expounding the theory of Hindu Rashtra had been smuggled out of the Andaman prison in 1917. There is no evidence that it had reached Hedgewar or that he had heard about it from somebody. Hedgewar had visited Savarkar in Ratnagiri Jail in 1924 but the RSS people would not admit that he had any long discussion with him about the ideology and organisation which he was to promote. If that were done the students of history would be spared a lot of guessing exercise. Admission of such a powerful influence involves the risk of diminishing the halo of originality, the creator image, which perhaps is very important for a cult like RSS to have self-confidence and to spread. It would also raise the inconvenient question why Hedgewar did not follow Savarkar into the Hindu Mahasabha whose politics and ideology the latter had shaped in the image of a Hindu Rashtra.

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* *Young India,* July 13, 1921 (Quoted by D.G, Tendulkar in *Mahatma,* Vol. 2, pp. 47-48).

The discussion of the RSS-Hindu Mahasabha relations may be a fruitless distraction at this stage when we are trying to discover the sources of Hedgewar's inspiration and identifying the motive behind the founding of the RSS as an organisation away from the din and bustle of the patriotic struggle for freedom. The subject will be taken up subsequently in a more appropriate context. Here it may be better to have a look at the developments in the country during the period when the mind of Hedgewar was being shaped. The exercise becomes relevant on the premise that a socially conscious individual must be imbibing impressions from the milieu in which he lived and worked. What were people thinking and feeling around the turn of the century?* Were the ideas of Hindu Rashtra vigorously advocated? Were they taking shape? Was there anything which could lead people to think in terms of Hindus alone overthrowing the British?

Let us first turn to a major work of those days--the *Indian War of Independence* by V.D. Savarkar. The book originally written in Marathi in 1907 was not published but clandestinely circulated among the young revolutionaries of the period. Tilak was one of the major influences on young Savarkar. The author says in the Preface:

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* Hedgewar was born on April 1, 1889 (See C.P. Bhishikar, *Keshav: Sangh Nirmata* (Hindi), p. 10)

> "The nation that has no consciousness of its past has no future. Equally true it is that a nation must develop its capacity not only of claiming a past but also of knowing how to use it for the furtherance of its future. *The nation ought to be the master and not the slave of its own history.* For, it is absolutely unwise to try to do certain things now irrespective of special considerations, simply because they had been once acted in the past. *The feeling of hatred against the Mahomedans was just and necessary in the times of Shivaji-but, such a feeling would be unjust and foolish if nursed now simply because it was the dominant feeling of the Hindus then"* (emphasis added).

In later pages Savarkar quoted the proclamations of Bahadur Shah to repudiate the suggestion that Hindus and Muslims did not form one single national whole. He quotes from Leckey's *Fictions Exposed* the Delhi Proclamation which reads:

> "Oh, you sons of Hindusthan, if we make up our mind we can destroy the enemy in no time! We will destroy the enemy and will release from dread our religion and our country, dearer to us than life itself!"*

The Proclamation issued at Bareilly reads:

> "Hindus and Mahomedans of India ! Arise ! Brethren Arise! Of all the gifts of God, the most gracious is that of Swaraj. Will the oppressive Demon who has robbed us of it by deceit be able to keep it away from us forever? No, no. The English have committed so many atrocities that the cup of their sins is already full. To add to it, they have now got the wicked desire to destroy our holy religion! Are you going to remain idle even now? God does not wish that you should remain so; for he has inspired in the

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* Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence*, pp. 8-9.

> hearts of Hindus and Mahomedans the desire to turn the English out of our country."*

That Savarkar changed his views a decade later, why and how is irrelevant in the present context. But Savarkar who was the symbol of revolutionary India at the turn of the century was an ardent advocate of united struggle by Hindus and Muslims for the attainment of swaraj and swadharma. He was opposed to emphasising the political or cultural differences even if warranted by examples in history. Rather he was in favour of pressing history into the service of promoting the consciousness of identity of interests--political as well as cultural--between the two major religious communities inhabiting this land. He goes a step further and indicates the need for evolving a positive, creative common goal which may be inspiring enough for both and which may enthuse the populace to make sacrifices for it. His comment on the causes of defeat of the 1857 struggle is very significant. He wrote:

> "Then, why was there the defeat? Several minor reasons have already been mentioned in their proper places. But the chief reason appears to be this. Though the plan of the destructive part of the revolution was complete, its creative part was not attractive enough. Nobody was against destroying the English power; but what about the future? If it was only to re-establish the former internecine strife, if it was to bring again the same state of affairs as before, the same Maharattas, and the same old quarrels--a condition, being tired of which, the nation, in a moment of mad folly, allowed foreigners to come in--if it were only for this, the more ignorant of the populace did not think it worth while to shed their blood for it. Therefore the Revolution worked out successfully as far as the destructive part was concerned; but as soon as the time for construction came, indifference, mutual fear and want of confidence sprang up. If there had been set clearly before the people

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* *Ibid.*, p. 9.

> at large a new ideal attractive enough to captivate their hearts, the growth and completion of the revolution would have been as successful and as grand as its beginning."*

This is not the language of those who used the methods of the market place and haggled for jobs, as Nehru put it, to have a pact for joining the national struggle. Nor was it a plea to revive Hindu pad padshahi or Hindu Rashtra of any variety. Conveyed through these words is the searching and craving of a passionate soul to find a way of freeing the people from the dead weight of tradition and evolving a basis for unity in terms of a future for the common man, the populace as the 19th century liberals described them. It is no call for an exclusivist sectarian or communal endeavour. There is no ambiguity left as we read his comment: "The Revolution of 1857 was a test to see how far India had come towards unity, independence and popular power." The footnote to this comment is a quotation from the introduction to *State Papers* by George William Forrest which reads:

> "Among the many lessons the Indian mutiny conveys to the historian, none is of greater importance than the warning that it is possible to have a Revolution in which Brahmins and Sudras, Hindus and Mahomedans, could be united against us, and that it is not safe to suppose that the peace and stability of our dominions, in any great measure, depends on the continent being inhabited by different religious systems for they mutually understand and respect and take a part in each other's modes and ways and doings. The mutiny reminds us that our dominions rest on a thin crust ever likely to be rent by titanic fires of social changes and religious revolutions."

This was the temper and mood of resurgent young India, pressing forward to bring the common man into the picture not merely as a serf loyally serving the lord and master but as a partner and co-sharer in the struggle for, as well as the fruits of, independence. It is not fortuitous that Maxim Gorky, the famous Russian writer who stood for democracy and democratic norms in the Communist Party of Soviet Union, hailed Savarkar's work. The democratic spirit was breathing a new life into political India through his words. These were revolutionary thoughts indicating that India's struggle may no longer remain confined to petitions, prayers and protests, that the ennui and lethargy following the defeat of 1857 was breaking and the essentially middle-class character of the nationalist movement might undergo a change. What frightened the British rulers was not so much the use of bomb and pistol but the emergence of such new ideas. They could easily meet the challenge of violence as they possessed superior instruments of violence but could claim no superiority in terms of ideas.

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* *Ibid,* pp. 431-32.

These ideas had roots in objective reality. Broad masses of people were coming into political action. Workers were getting organised in factories and peasants were standing up in farms to resist the tyranny and oppression of the foreign rule. Boycott of British goods and picketing of the shops selling foreign cloth saw people of all classes coming together. There were massive processions, demonstrations and strike actions. And this accelerated the process of welding together people of various regions, religions and castes. These developments drew the comment from Lajpat Rai that "national consciousness had awakened" and that "up to now India was taken to be a mere geographical entity. It had now begun to have a unified existence and place among nations."*

B.G. Tilak himself pointed out during that period that the new upsurge had resulted in the emergence of India as a nation becoming an accomplished fact and that the Indians were confronting the British as an oppressed nation and demanding political rights.**

The following extract from an article of Tilak clearly shows the conception of swaraj which he had in mind:

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* Speech at Swadeshi Conference, *Times of India,* January 4, 1903.

** (Quoted by Reisner, 1. M, from a report from the Russian consulate in Bombay (Tsarist Russian Foreign Policy Archives).

"The British are not satisfied with keeping only the ruling power in their hands; but they want also to seize possession of the trade and industries of this country forcibly and unjustly to ruin them. Well, even after doing so much they should at least have kept the burden of taxation on the people light; but the very reverse of it is seen to be the case. In short, Swarajya albeit of the old type, is gone, trade has been ruined, industries have collapsed, glory has come to an end, wealth has departed, ability has disappeared and courage has failed. There is no education according to the new system, no rights, no respect for public opinion, no prosperity, no contentment, but only there is the very violent pressure of the three 'd's', of *daridrya* (poverty), *dushkal* (famine) and *druvyashoshan* (sucking up of wealth) constantly troubling us. The moment an attempt is sought to be made according to one's strength to raise up the head of the nation out of this, the head is sure to be bruised by the stone roller of the system of British rule!... (by the) pressure of tyranny and high-handedness...*

The line of thought here does not point to Hedgewar's Hindu Rashtravad but to Jawaharlal Nehru who imparted a large dose of secular ideas and sought to provide socio-economic content to the sentiment of nationalism. Such ideas were gaining currency in the Congress and the country. Nehru has rightly pointed out that "the real symbol of the new age was Bal Gangadhar Tilak" and that "there was no doubt that the vast majority of politically-minded people in India favoured Tilak and his group".**

A big event of the period was the partition of Bengal enforced by Viceroy Curzon in the teeth of bitter opposition. It has added significance for the present discussion because at the time when anti-partition agitation was raging in

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* *Mahratta,* June 9, 1908.

** Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India,* p. 295.

Bengal Hedgewar was in Calcutta as a medical student and is said to have been close to the agitators. The idea behind the partition scheme was to create rival centres to Calcutta for political activity which could then be played against one another by the imperial authority. "The Government", writes Grover, "believed that the Territorial Redistribution Scheme would in course of time create new centres of activity among the Mohammedans at Dacca, among the natives of Bihar at Patna, among the Oriyas at Cuttack and thus leave it 'no longer possible for a small knot of persons at Calcutta to manipulate or manufacture public opinion throughout the whole of Bengal' and for universal consumption."*

Curzon was using another weapon also, that is, to drive a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims. He tried to sell the partition scheme as a favour to the Muslims. Thus speaking at Dacca he told his predominantly Muslim audience that the partition would "invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of old Mussulman viceroys and kings".**

Surendra Nath Banerjea understood the mischief and observed that the partition plan was fatal "to the close union between Hindus and Muslims upon which the prospects of India's advancement so largely depended".***

To begin with there was all-round opposition to the scheme both by the Hindus and Muslims. During his 1904 tour of the East Bengal districts Curzon could see the solidarity of the Bengalis in the placards displayed in the streets of Dacca which read: 'Pray do not sever Bengalis', 'Do not divide us', 'Do not flout history and nationality'. The *Moslem Chronicle* of Calcutta wrote editorially: "We

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* B. L. Grover, *British Policy towards Indian Nationalism: 1885-1909*, p. 66.

** Curzon's Address at Dacca, Feb. 18, 1904.

*** S. N. Banerjea, A *Nation in the Making*, p. 188.

> do not recollect that there has been in the discussion of public questions, ever before so much unanimity of voice as that which is raising its shouts of protest against the partition of Bengal."*
>
> Gradually however the British were able to wean the Muslims away from the anti-partition agitation and the opposition became predominantly Hindu. The policy of divide and rule had succeeded leaving behind a bitter trail of communal ill-will. This was the British response to the growing radicalisation of the national movement. The policy of 'kisses and kicks' as it unfolded during Minto's viceroyalty was to suppress the radical elements, drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims and divide the Congress. When the split took place at the Surat Congress Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, wrote to Viceroy Minto: "It is quite impossible to see how the Congress collapse will work out, but so far everything points to the disappearance of the Extremists and to some reasonable recognition by the Moderates of our intentions. I feel pretty sure that this will be the case, for a time-it is a great triumph for us."**

Having split the Congress and having suppressed the radical voices by deportation of leaders like Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, by the enforcement of Draconian laws like the Seditious Meetings Act, 1907,the Newspapers Act, 1908, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908, the British rulers began consolidation of their position, on the one hand, by introducing constitutional reforms and, on the other, by encouraging communal elements and vested interests. The reforms were expected to strengthen the hands loyalist Moderates in the Congress while the latter measures provided a counterpoise to any possible ambitiousness growing inside or outside the Congress.

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* The *Moslem Chronicle*, January 9, 1904.

** Morley to Minto, in Grover, *op cit.*, p. 950.

In a personal letter to Viscount Middleton on April 29, 1908, Minto mentions the possibility of winning over certain sections:

> "Things in India generally are much quieter, and in the 'agitated' districts, Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam, there is an inclination to make friends; and no doubt some of the most leading agitators can be got hold of if our own people will only show a little tact and forbearance."

Further on he recommends:

> "What we must really try to do is to strengthen the classes who have a real stake in the country-the Ruling Chiefs, the great landowners, the great interests of all sorts-they are really loyal to us, and they know the weaknesses of their countrymen much better than we do."*

It was in pursuance of this policy that Minto encouraged the Muslim deputation which was the precursor of the formation of the Muslim League. The story of this deputation is too well-known to be recapitulated here. To get an idea how the British mind was working it is enough to recall what Minto wrote to the Prince of Wales on December 13, 1906: "The Mohammedan movement has been a most telling reply to Bengali agitation and people can see well enough now that if they go too far in backing up the latter, they run the risk of running their heads against sterner stuff than they are accustomed to deal with." And the Viceroy got a pat on the back from the Secretary of State who, in a letter on October 5, 1906, wrote:" Your address (to the Muslim deputation) was admirable alike in spirit, in the choice of topics and in the handling. . . It has been thoroughly appreciated here by the press and the people. . . It seems as if all had gone excellently. It will be interesting to see how our Hindu friends take it."

The Hindu friends were quite willing to oblige. Prabhu Narain, the Maharaja of Banaras, offered to lead a delegation of representative Hindus to the Viceroy on the lines of the Muslim deputation led by the Aga Khan. In his letter he condemned the

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* Minto to Middleton, *ibid.*, pp. 252-54.

Congress policy of agitation in a language which was most undignified, approving the deportation of Lajpat Rai and blaming the Arya Samaj for spreading sedition.

The leadership of the national movement was quite aware of the provocative role of the colonial authorities in fomenting Hindu-Muslim strife. We have already mentioned the reaction of Surendra Nath Banerjea to Curzon's mischief. Tilak also was of opinion that the British officials were behind the conflict. His biographer, N.C. Kelkar, reports: "He attributed these manifestations of radical prejudice mainly to the secret instigation of some short-sighted Anglo-Indian officers. The policy of 'Divide and Rule', initiated by Lord Dufferin, was, according to him, at the bottom of all the mischief."*

Mohammad Ali Jinnah held the same view, too. While giving evidence before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament dealing with Hindu-Muslim riots he remarked: "If you ask me, very often these riots are based on some misunderstanding, and it is because the police have taken one side or the other."**

Despite this realisation the middle-class leadership of India, both Hindu and Muslim, was not able to find a way of defeating this policy. Nor did they ever realise that the idiom of religion which they employed to rouse the masses developed more separateness than unity. The only way they could think of forging unity was to enter into mutual pacts about proportion of representation in the legislatures and jobs in the government offices. It was a kind of recognition of polycentrism within the nation which later developed into two separate identities as a result of the machinations of the third party which was invariably able to frustrate every pact or understanding by offering a more attractive bid. Thus the Lucknow Pact, so assiduously evolved by Tilak, Jinnah and Annie Besant, was defeated by the Government of India Act, 1919.

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* N.C. Kelkar, *Landmarks in Lokamanya's Life*, p. 10.

** Quoted in Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims*, pp. 158-59, The manoeuvre of the government was overwhelmed by the popular upsurge of national sentiment in the wake of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the sense of betrayal among the Muslims over the question of Khilafat. The question of swaraj and, in other words, the contradiction between British imperialism and Indian nationalism came to the forefront. The Home Rule movement had taken the masses to a new level of consciousness and there were signs everywhere that the common man in India was ready to make sacrifices to see the last Briton out of India. Gandhi had appeared on the scene and, with his new and ingenious methods of struggle, had generated a new atmosphere of hope and determination. The wrong of the Punjab became the cause of the entire country even as the partition of Bengal had shaken the whole of India earlier. The espousal of the cause of Khilafat by Gandhi brought the Muslims into the non-cooperation movement thus breaking the imperialist alliance with the Muslim leadership. Gandhi justified his support to Khilafat in the interests of Hindu-Muslim unity: "The Khilafat will not recur for another hundred years. If the Hindus wish to cultivate eternal friendship with the Mussalmans they must perish with them in the attempt to vindicate the honour of Islam." Khilafat had shaken the entire Muslim community and no Muslim leader, however loyal to the Crown, could stop the Muslims from joining it. It generated an unprecedented atmosphere which reverberated with the new slogan of 'Hindu-Mussalman ki jai' and people became intensely conscious that the blood of the Hindus and the Muslims had flowed together in Amritsar.

Gandhi's movement was to be strictly non-violent but the organisation for it was not adequate to ward off any provocation which could manifest in violence. Violence began to surface at many places and Gandhi decided to abandon the movement after the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922. The decision came as a shock even to admirers of Gandhi and brought in its wake demoralisation and confusion. Worse still, the 'bottled up violence' burst out in the form of communal riots, as Jawaharlal Nehru later put it. Gandhi came in for criticism by many of his colleagues for imparting religious colour to the political movement which had resulted in communal violence.

The whole atmosphere was filled with the poison of communal passion to the delight of the British. The nationalist tide which made Gandhi a formidable adversary came to ebb. The Congress got divided and the Khilafat Committee disintegrated. While the pro-changers and no-changers were busy arguing over entry or non-entry into councils the Hindus and the Muslims were flying at each other's throat. Communal violence was confined mainly to urban areas of North India but the wide publicity given to these incidents made it a major issue. Passions were further inflamed by highlighting the cases of rape and abduction so that elemental feelings were aroused smothering the still small voice of sanity. What happened as a consequence is sketched by Dr. Tara Chand in the following words:

> "The Hindu Mahasabha was gaining in popularity. Madan Mohan Malaviya was resuscitating the atrophied organisation, and such Congress stalwarts as Lajpat Rai, Shraddhanand and Jayakar were gravitating towards it. Lajpat Rai had despaired of Hindu-Muslim unity and later Tagore* endorsed his views".

In the annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Banaras in 1923, Malaviya proposed the formation of a Hindu organisation (Sangathan) to protect Hindu interests. Shraddhanand started the scheme of reclaiming the Muslim converts (Shuddhi).

About the result of this Tara Chand writes:

> "The Muslim League had been relegated to inanition. But in 1923 it was prodded into activity as a result of Hindu Mahasabha's revival. In 1923 its session was held for the first time after many years in a different place from the venue of the Congress, namely, Lucknow, where the President Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgri made a strong plea

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* Rabindranath Tagore, "Through Indian Eyes" *(Times of India,* April 18, 1924. Translation of an interview given to a Bengali paper). See Ram Gopal, *op cit.*, p. 165.

> for Hindu-Muslim understanding. He gave a warning that the continuance of dissension would make Swaraj an insubstantial fantasy, 'like the pleasing sound of distant drums', and 'illusory expectation'. During the session Ansari urged the framing of a national pact to ensure unity and harmony among the communities.
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> But the atmosphere had become vitiated. Kitchlew had started the counter movement of Tabligh and Tanzim. Fazli Hussain advocated the conversion of the Depressed Class Hindus to Islam. The Muslim Leaguers and Khilafatists took up the cry. The resulting riots inflamed passions and exacerbated animosity".*

It is significant to note that most of the Congress leaders, though upset over the deeds of the Muslims, did not think in terms of excommunicating them from their idea of nationalism. Lajpat Rai, for instance, called in question the wisdom of importing religion into politics but not of political unity of Hindus and Muslims into one national entity. He had supported the Nagpur resolution endorsing Gandhi's movement which combined non-cooperation and Khilafat but he did not go back on it. This is what he wrote in 1924:

> "Unhappily during the last decade we have created an atmosphere which smells more of orthodoxy and bigotry than of rationalism and toleration. The non-cooperation movement itself has materially contributed to the creation of this atmosphere. It was unfortunate that the Khilafat movement in India should have taken its stand on a religious rather than a political basis. *There were political grounds to support it.* It was still more unfortunate that Mahatma Gandhi and the leaders of the Khilafat movement should have brought religion into such prominence in connection with a movement which was really and fundamentally more political than religious. The desire to

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* Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India,* Vol. IV, p.17.

> seek religious sanction for the various items *of* the non-cooperation programme was another great blunder. It led directly to the revival of sectarian zeal and to the re-enthroning of influences and forces which were antagonistic to the idea of a united India."*

People like Dr. Moonje, however, were in favour of setting up separate Hindu organisations to protect Hindu girls. Moonje wrote about this to Jayakar but the latter was not in favour of making a noise about it. In his reply he pointed out that while something positive needed to be done every care should be taken not to do anything which may aggravate the communal situation. According to Jayakar his views were shared by Lajpat Rai and Malaviya also.**

The general reaction in the political circles was that the British had taken advantage of the recession in the movement to launch a counter-attack in the form of fanning the embers of communalism and that it should be resisted by repairing the cracks in unity. Khilafatists, Bhurgri and Ansari, started work among Muslims to stem the tide. The Congress appointed a committee consisting of Lajpat Rai, Ansari and Mahatab Singh (replaced by Amar Singh when Mahtab Singh went to jail) to draft a unity formula. Their draft came to be known as the Solan Pact. C.R. Das drew up the Bengal Pact. The best index of the mood is that all sections of the Congress pressed and persuaded Gandhi (by then released from jail) to take up the presidentship of the Congress to be held at Belgaum. And this was done when Gandhi had already published his views on the causes and cure of Hindu-Muslim tension. He had done it in reply to his communal critics. Some Hindus had said: "You asked the Hindus to make common cause with the Muslims on the Khilafat question. That resulted in unifying and awakening the Musalmans, and now that the Khilafat is over, the awakened Muslims have proclaimed a kind of holy war against us Hindus." The Muslims said: "We simple minded people have been unjustly treated. You by your agitation won over Mahomed Ali to your side and you attacked the famous institution at Aligarh built with patient care by Sir Syed Ahmed. Your boycott of the councils prevented our able men from going to the councils to the prejudice of the interests of our community.”

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* V.C. Joshi, (ed.), *Lala Laipat Rai, Writings and Speeches,* Vol. II, pp. 181-82.

** M.R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life,* pp. 189-90.

Gandhi’s response to all the criticisms and cogitation on this score was a confident reiteration of belief in non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity expressed through an article* in *Young India.* He was not at all apologetic about support to Khilafat and asserted:

> “Had I been a prophet and foreseen all that has happened, I should still have thrown myself into the Khilafat agitation. The awakening of the masses was a necessary part of the training. It is a tremendous gain. I would do nothing to put the people to sleep again.”

It should be noted that Gandhi had his eye on the masses and wanted to break out of the snares and shackles of middle-class politics woven round representation. In the same article he points out: “‘Surely the *millions* do not want to become legislators and municipal councillors.”

On the need for unity he wrote:

> “For me the immediate question before the country is the Hindu-Muslim question. I agree with Mr. Jinnah that Hindu-Muslim unity means Swaraj. I see no way of achieving anything in this afflicted country without a lasting heart unity between the Hindus and Musalmans of India. I believe in the immediate possibility of achieving it, because it is so natural, so necessary for both, and because I believe in human nature.”

What was his remedy for the disease? Non-violence:

> “I am sure that if we can but revert to our faith, if we ever had any, in non-violence .... the present tension between the two communities will largely subside. For, in my opinion an attitude of non-violence in our mutual

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* Quoted by Tendulkar, G.D., *Mahatma,* vol. 3, pp. 130-34.

> relations is an indispensable condition prior to a discussion of the remedies for the removal of the tension. It must be a common cause between the two communities that neither party shall take the law into its own hands, but that all points in dispute wherever and whenever they arise, shall be decided by reference either to private arbitration or to the law courts, if they wish. This is the whole meaning of non-violence so far as the communal matters are concerned. To put it in another way, just as we do not break one another's heads in respect of civil matters, so may we not do even in respect of religious matters."

Non-violence was a creed with Gandhi. He was capable of quoting chapter and verse from the religious scriptures of all the communities to prove that it was enjoined upon by all religions. But here he recommends it as a thoroughly secular principle as the only way of civilised living, as a basis for democratic resolution of disputes. The world has known from experience that it is the only weapon if co-existence is preferable to co-destruction; that is why cease-fire is the first call of the international community to prevent a local conflict from developing into a major war. The weapon has been found not only effective but beneficial for all concerned.

Lest it should be said that he recommended surrender or capitulation to the Hindus, as Golwalkar insinuated, he made it clear. "My non-violence does not admit of running away from danger and leaving the dear ones unprotected. Between violence and cowardly flight, 1 can only prefer violence to cowardice."

That some people had started Hindu organisations or *akhadas* as a preparation for self-defence had come to his notice and he warned against such a course:

> "The way, however, does not lie through *akhadas*. Not that I mind them. On the contrary, I want them for physical culture. Then they should be for all. But if they are meant as a preparation for self-defence in Hindu-Musalman conflicts, they are foredoomed to failure. Musalmans can play the same game, and such preparations, secret or open,

> do cause suspicion and irritation. They can provide no remedy. It is for the thoughtful few to make quarrels impossible by making arbitration popular and obligatory."
>
> This is virtual view of Gandhi on RSS.

Could anybody committed to the cause of freedom object to this? History of the struggle since 1857 had brought home the realisation that whenever there was Hindu-Muslim unity the freedom struggle had advanced and the imperialists had to beat a retreat even if it meant a few concessions. The other side of it also was quite apparent that whenever there was an ebb in the struggle the tide of communal conflict rose. It was also a fact that the British rulers and their Indian henchmen fanned this conflict as a part of the policy to defeat, divide and disrupt the movement. In pursuance of this policy they sometimes favoured Hindus and, at others, Muslims, all the time trying to create an impression that whoever led the anti-British struggle would lose and whoever cooperated would stand to gain. Immediately after 1857 they suppressed the Muslims and encouraged the Hindus. But when the rising Hindu middle class started demanding a share in the administration and exhibiting signs of aspiration for freedom they brought forth first Sir Syed and then the Muslim League. Just as there were quislings among the Muslims, so were there among the Hindus whose mouth watered at the possible rewards of cooperation. Nothing would have suited the British so much as permanent division between the two major components of Indian nationalism. Quite naturally the votaries of swaraj dwelt upon the need for mutual goodwill, understanding and unity. Equally naturally the advocates of responsive cooperation with the British began to adopt a communal attitude.

How did Hedgewar react in this background and what stand did he take in this situation? According to the latest officially published biography the problems of the national movement and national unity very much agitated his mind and after long and deep thinking he came to the conclusion that Hindus alone constituted the nation in India; the unity, freedom and prosperity of the Hindus alone meant swaraj:

> "Doctorji thought deeply over a long period on the question of national identity. The world over there was no dispute over the British, the German and the French being the nation in England, Germany and France respectively. Why then should there be any confusion about nationhood in Hindustan? Why try to bind into one national bundle people who do not believe in common interest, common aspirations, common ideals and common traditions? Why have strange expressions like nationalist Musalman and nationalist Christian come into currency ?... The answer that he found after deep thought and contemplation was absolutely clear, unambiguous and true to the touchstone of history: Hindu society living in this country since times immemorial is the national society here and the main responsibility of this country rests with this society. The same Hindu people have built the life-values, ideals and culture of this country and, therefore, their nationhood is self-evident."*

So, Hedgewar hit upon the solution that national unity would immediately come about if it was declared that non-Hindus, like Muslims and Christians, do not form a part of the nation because they deny that Hindu tradition, Hindu ideals and Hindu culture are theirs too. This idea, he further thought, must be lying buried in the mind of all the Hindus and this 'self-forgetfulness' on their part is the cause of all the ills that the country and the people suffer from. Once the Hindus are roused and united on the basis of this realisation all the problems would vanish.

Perhaps Hedgewar at that time was too insignificant a person and his ideas too obscure to be taken note of. There was hardly any reaction to what he did or said. Nor is there any indication that the British government welcomed it. But the seed that he sowed was the seed of a more permanent cleavage between Hindus and non-Hindus than any known hitherto. The Hindu Mahasabha also had not till then gone beyond claiming what they thought were the legitimate rights of the Hindus as the majority community. The improvement that Hedgewar had made on the communal attitudes of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League was of a fundamental nature. It fitted neatly and ideally, like a ball in the socket, into the 'divide and rule' policy of the government.

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* Bhishikar, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

It is relevant in this context to remember that Hedgewar belonged to the group of Moonje which was opposed to Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation and Hindu-Muslim unity, and advocated responsive cooperation with the British government on the pattern of the Muslim League and wanted to have separate militant Hindu organisations. That is why, later when its manifest results began to appear, the RSS began to be characterised as a pro-British organisation. Objectively speaking it was serving the purpose of the British. It became more explicit later when the RSS characterised anti-British attitude as a reactionary view:

> "The theories of territorial nationalism and of common danger, which formed the basis for our concept of nation, had deprived us of the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu Nationhood and made many of the 'freedom movements' virtually anti-British movements. Anti-Britishism was equated with patriotism and nationalism. This reactionary view has had disastrous effects upon the entire course of the freedom movement, its leaders and the common people."*

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* Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 142-43.

Chapter-IV

The Founder of the RSS

The foregoing bird's eye view of the cross currents of politics and social life does not fully explain the birth of the RSS. Historical experience, in fact, was pressing the people more and more towards the Gandhian solution of the communal problem through mass approach which was developing clearer contours with the Nehruvian socio-economic and democratic content taking the place of the religious motif. The RSS presented a total turn about, something contrary to the logical demand of the objective situation, a course of action prompted by passions of the moment rather than understanding of the historical perspective. Subjective reaction rather than objective appraisal of the situation was the basis for founding the new organisation. The new outfit did not articulate the needs and perceptions of people but sought to teach them and administer an esoteric set of ideas which are presented as some kind of a divine revelation to its founder.

It is, therefore, natural to turn to the man who founded it. What was the personality that undertook this task of outright repudiation of the course of history and began to forge an instrument to reverse it by reasserting the revivalist and militant Hindu religious motif? It implied rejection of the Gandhian method--somewhat like that of the Bhakti saints of the 17th century--of emphasising the common truth of all religions as a basis for settling religious differences and evolving a common front for attainment of swaraj and it stood directly opposed to Nehru's insistence on secular aspects of the struggle, relegating religion exclusively to the sphere of personal life. One would naturally like to know what were the philosophical, cultural, political or personal reasons that singly or as a combination resulted in this development. The personality of Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, who is said to be the sole inspiration and architect of the RSS, obviously attracts our attention.

Hedgewar is, however, unique among the prominent politicians of that era not to have left behind any personal record of his life, activities and thinking. Nor do we find any reference to him in political writings of the period. Most of his contemporaries, including such like-minded people as Savarkar and Moonje have made endeavours to present before the public their testaments of faith by analysing history and contemporary politics, thus offering reasons for arriving at their beliefs. No such grounds for understanding or disputation have been left behind by Hedgewar. According to the accounts given by the RSS he sought to convince people more by the force of his personality than by rational argument. An episode related by Golwalkar* indicates his way of thinking and working. At a particular meeting in the early stages of the RSS a heated discussion started over the idea of Hindu Rashtra as presented by Hedgewar and a young man rather cantankerously said: 'Who is so foolish as to say that this is Hindu-Rashtra.' Hedgewar applied a kind of closure to the discussion by asserting: "I Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, say that this is Hindu Rashtra." Golwalkar commented on this: "It is no more than one sentence. No particular argument and no reasoning. The surprising thing is that the very utterance of these words convinced all those present and everybody agreed to take the oath and become a swayamsewak."* This makes an understanding of Hedgewar all the more imperative to understand the RSS. The nature of relationship between the two partakes of the relationship between the Creator and Creation or between a guru and the cult. The RSS people invariably tell us: 'If you want to know Doctorji, know the RSS', and also, 'If you want to know RSS, know Doctorji'. "The revered Doctorji and Sangh had become so identified with each other that in the story of his life can be had the inspiring view of the systematic development of the Sangh",** says the present RSS chief. The official biographer of Hedgewar writes: "The work of the RSS and the life of Doctorji are inseparable."'***

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* *Shri Guruji Samagra Darshan* (Hindi), Part V, pp. 22-3.

While this attitude reflects a highly authoritarian, dogmatic and totalitarian mentality, it presents almost insurmountable difficulties in the understanding of the organisation, particularly because there is hardly any reference to the man or his work in the accounts of his contemporaries whether political, social, historical or personal. The followers of Hedgewar also have not felt the need of presenting any detailed objective study of his personal life. As they are absolutely convinced of the total identity of Hedgewar and the RSS the biographical writings in currency are more in the nature of commentaries on the organisation in the Puranic style where stories are narrated to present ideas and not human beings.

Before we come back to the various problems relevant to the subject of the present book let us recount the broad facts of Hedgewar's life, at least up to the starting of the RSS as far as they can be rescued from the enormous verbiage in uhich they are hidden.

Keshav Hedgewar was born in Nagpur on April 1, 1889. He was the third son of a Brahmin priest, Baliram Hedgewar. The family had hailed from Kundkurti, a small village in the state of Hyderabad (Deccan) several generations earlier and had been pursuing the priestly vocation. The house they lived in was their only property and it too was rather dark and dingy, proclaiming their poverty. The circumstances in which the family migrated from the Nizam's dominions are not known. The early upbringing of Keshav must have been in an orthodox Hindu atmosphere as the priestly vocation continued to be pursued even by his elder brother after the death of their parents in 1902. His eldest brother, Mahadev Shastri, was a hot-tempered man and the atmosphere in the house was none-too-happy. Very often Keshav was subjected to corporal punishment over trifling matters. Naturally much respect for home and family life did not develop. Even the family vocation was abhorrent to the sensitive child.

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* *Ibid.*

** Bhishikar,*op. cit.*, p. 5.

*** *Ibid*, p. 3.

A sensitive child in such circumstances would either develop sullenness or develop liking for outdoor life and activities. Keshav developed extrovert habits and, quite early in life, showed signs of patriotic sentiment. On the occasion of the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign sweets were distributed among school children; Keshav received the packet but threw it into the dust-bin rather than eating it. He also did not participate four years later in the celebration to mark the coronation of Edward VII. For leading a student agitation in his school, the Neil City High School, he was expelled in 1905. To continue his schooling he got admission in the National School at Yeotmal in the Berar region with the help of Bapuji Aney and Dr. Moonje. But soon after that school closed down and Keshav was obliged to shift to the National School in Poona, perhaps with the help of the same friends. The family was not in a position to bear the expenses and Keshav depended on the largesse of Moonje who appreciated his daring and intrepidity; he must have seen in him a potentially useful recruit for his political activities. Moonje was a great advocate of militancy and physical culture and Hedgewar had displayed keen interest in activities like wrestling, racing, swimming. He had a well-built body and had shown some prowess in street-fighting. He was good material for political work where brawn rather than brain decided the issues which was not uncommon in those days.

After passing matriculation he stayed in Poona for a few years to earn some money so that he could pursue further studies. He worked as a teacher and collected some money. With assurance of support from Moonje he decided to take up medical studies in Calcutta. During his days in Nagpur and Poona, it is said, Hedgewar had been attracted towards the terrorist cult which was very prominent in those areas. His decision to go to Calcutta and pursue medical education is supposed to have been motivated partly by a desire to join some 'revolutionary' group because Calcutta was the home of most such activities. Keshav's admiration for Tilak and the Shivaji cult started by him must have turned his mind in that direction.

Keshav Hedgewar was a student of National Medical College, Calcutta, from 1910 to 1915. He stayed first in the Maharashtra Lodge and then in the Shanti Niketan Lodge, boarding houses started to help students coming mainly from Maharashtra. These places were a centre of student politics; there were frenzied discussions and a lot of activity. It is there that he came in contact with the revolutionary terrorist groups. How close he was to them is not quite clear. There are two versions extant. Curran, an American specialist on RSS, writes: "Hedgewar did not acquire enough importance in these activities to incur the overt wrath of the authorities. No available evidence exists that he was in jail during this period in Calcutta. although according to Sangh members with knowledge of these years, the British kept him under police surveillance."* The official RSS version is as follows: "As soon as he reached Calcutta he was admitted to the innermost circle of the Anushilan Samiti. There is no doubt that he was trusted and was given several assignments involving great risk. During this period he acted as carrier of arms and ammunition for the revolutionary group in the Central Provinces."* It is however admitted that "no mention anywhere is available of the revolutionary responsibilities which he carried out during this period, with who and who he came in contact and what lessons he drew from his experiences in this work".

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* J.A.Curran, *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics,* p.13.
This author, it is now well-known, was a senior official of the CIA. The CIA had been created as an espionage agency during World War II especially to bring the war to a conclusion by securing some arrangement with Nazi Germany so that the advancing Soviet forces may not gain foothold in the heart of Europe. The project failed but the agency was not disbanded. One of the tasks assigned to it by the US government immediately after the war was to survey the post-war scene with a view to evolving a policy for rolling back Soviet communism which in the cold war terminology was described as communist imperialism. (Continued on next page).

He also took part in social service activities. He learnt Bengali language and frequently visited the Ramakrishna Mission offices. During the periodic floods in the Damodar river he used to work as a volunteer in the relief organisation of the Mission. His biographer claims that Hedgewar's work and behaviour impressed the prominent Bengali leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Shyam Sunder Chakravarty and Motilal Ghosh.

The agency studied and analysed the situation in the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa to make an assessment of the developments after the withdrawal of colonial power. There was anxiety that the enormous problems of poverty and backwardness may press these countries to become socialist and therefore anti-American.

It sponsored several studies and surveys through apparently academic organisations and institutions to evaluate the potential of communist advance as also the relative capacities of various socio-political groups and organisations to offer resistance to such a development. Clearly they were on the look out for allies in the cold war against the USSR and the new socialist world that had emerged after the war.

Curran's study was sponsored by the Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, which claims to be 'an unofficial and non-partisan organisation'. Whatever be the motive behind the study, it is valuable as thc first well-documented monogram on the RSS. The veracity of the information presented can also not be doubted because it is based, as the author says, 'on a year and half of frequent association with the RSS'. Curran had reasons to be grateful to RSS members, from Golwalkar downwards, because they hardly ever allow outsiders, much less foreigners, to have such a ringside view.

The study had remained a mimeographed document as it was circulated in 1951 till it was published in 1979 by All India Qaumi Ekta Sammelan of Raj Narain as a war missile in the campaign against the RSS.

* Bhishikar, *op cit.*, p. 13.

After receiving the diploma in medicine Keshav Hedgewar returned to Nagpur and 'for some time remained engaged in the cause of armed revolution'. Bhishikar says: "By then World War I had started. England was involved in war. He wanted to take advantage of the situation and start armed revolt to end the slavery of the country. With this in view he organised a plan and there is evidence to believe that its network spread from the Panjab to Goa. But that plan could not fructify. Rather there came the bitter moment when he had to himself destroy it all."* In another context the same author puts this episode quite differently: "Doctorji had tried to secure support and approval of Tilakji for the various plans of armed revolt that sprang up in his mind at the time of World War I. Tilakji did not find any one of them practical."**

In the light of the latter comment the version of a close associate of Hedgewar, G.M. Huddar, seems to be closer to the truth. Huddar writes: "In Calcutta he had established contacts with some secret organisations. I was myself initiated into the local revolutionary organisation by the late V.V. Kelkar, an elderly advocate of Nagpur High Court, in 1918. Though we called it a revolutionary organisation, it resembled more a secret conspiratorial group of young men."*** A battle-scarred general like B.G. Tilak did not find the visions of the raw youth worthy of serious notice. And it appears Tilak's reaction cooled Hedgewar's ardour for armed revolt for ever.

We have already noticed the disinclination of Hedgewar for normal family life. On his return from Calcutta when a suggestion was made about marriage he turned it down. He did not make use of his medical education for earning a livelihood either. About his starting medical practice, Curran says that he did start but 'gradually abandoned in favour of nationalist activities'. Bhishikar, however, is vague about it. Curran expresses ignorance about 'the exact nature of his political activities during the next five years', that is, after his arrival in Nagpur. He only reports the Sangh members saying that he had joined the local Hindu Mahasabha and 'composed pamphlets, made speeches'. This period of 5-7 years has been characterised by Bhishikar as the 'formative period' of the mind which later expressed itself in the form of the RSS. Of his activities and experiences he says: "In the new atmosphere Doctorji was simultaneously working for the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha and many other organisations. He busied himself with the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal*, daily *Swatantrya,* student organisations, akhada, vyayamshala, public meetings, conferences, public speeches etc." After 1923 he is reported to have been 'drawn more and more towards the youth organisations and the discussions and debates on national problems carried on therein; he was developing more faith in those activities'. It is, however, recognised that "although he had prior acquaintance with the elders in politics yet none of them was prepared to support the new ideas taking shape in the mind of Doctorji".**

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* *Ibid.*, p. 14,

** *Ibid.*, p. 29.

*** G. M. Huddar, "The RSS and Netaji" in the *Illustrated Weekly af India.* October 7, 1979. Huddar was the first General Secretary of the RSS.

His open political work after disillusionment with conspiratorial activity started with the Congress. In those days one could simultaneously be a member of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress and Dr. B.S. Moonje was a prominent leader of the CP Congress. As a Congress activist Hedgewar participated in the volunteer group that served at the 1920 session of the Congress in Nagpur. It is also asserted by the same author that he went along with Dr. Moonje to Pondicherry to see whether Aurobindo Ghosh could be persuaded to preside over the session. The mission, of course, failed. In the Nagpur Congress a resolution was recommended by the Reception Committee which said that "the goal of the Congress is to establish a republic in India and to free the countries of the world from exploitation by capitalist countries".

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* An organisation of the same name was found guilty of inciting communal violence in Bhiwandi (Maharashtra) by the Madon Commission of Inquiry. (See Chapter-XIII.

** Bhishikar, *op. cit.,* p. 27.

According to Bhishikar the resolution had been inspired by Hedgewar and was rejected by the Congress. In the absence of any other evidence it seems somewhat extraordinary that Hedgewar should move, or even support, such a resolution; he was not known to think either in terms of ending capitalist exploitation or internationalism both of which are implied in the above formulation, however imprecise be its character.

What is known and corresponds to his generally known views is his opposition to Gandhi's insistence on non-violent non-cooperation and support to Khilafat. He is said to have conveyed his views to Gandhi himself. And yet, like many others who had reservations on these counts, he plunged into the 1921 movement. He toured the district in the company of Dr. Moonje and made fiery speeches for which he was arrested and tried. The statement he made in the court in defence of his action was considered 'more seditious than his speech' on account of which he was being tried.

The motivation behind participation in the movement was only to prove his bona fides as a patriot. According to Bhishikar he joined the non-cooperation movement because "he could not tolerate a situation in which somebody should confront him with the question that when thousands were going to jail to end British rule in one year where were you hiding and he should have to hang his head in shame for lack of adequate reply".* This view is endorsed by Huddar who puts it as follows:

"It has been argued that Dr. Hedgewar had joined Gandhi's movement in 1920 and was jailed. This is true; but it should not be regarded as a sign of his faith in mass action. It was, rather, to demonstrate that they were as unafraid of imprisonment as any other patriot having faith in a mass movement."**

After coming out of prison in 1922 he began to openly criticise Gandhi for supporting Khilafat and held his policies responsible for the sufferings of the Hindus in the riots that occurred in various parts of the country, particularly the Moplah rebellion. He did not show any recognition of the fact that it was an agrarian revolt against the British and the toady landlords but had been given a communal turn by political and economic vested interests.

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* Bhishikar, *ibid,* p 30.

** Huddar, *op.cit.* (It is noteworthy that the RSS did not make a similar show of patriotism during the Quit India movement of 1942.)

In 1923 there was communal tension in Nagpur. The cause was the same as at many other places that is, insistence on and objection to music before the mosque. Hedgewar took a leading part in asserting that in Nagpur they would not go in for any kind of peace pact as was done elsewhere but would assert the right of the Hindus by bringing out processions with music ahead even before the mosque. The leader of the agitation was really Dr Moonje and Hedgewar acted as the storm trooper. There was no riot and the religious procession called Dindi passed off peacefully. It is interpreted by the RSS people as the first major victory of Dr. Hedgewar. In the same year he started a gymnasium called 'Maharashtra Vyayamshala' and a study circle by the name of 'Shiksha Prasarak Mandal'. He had also started about the same time a volunteer organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsewak Mandal. With these activities Hedgewar was approaching the starting point of the RSS. In a number of meetings held under these auspices in Tilak Mahavidyalaya he put his ideas and plans before a number of friends and co-workers but did not find much response.

Having recounted the facts of Hedgewar's life before the foundation of the RSS we now come to the questions that arise from there. We have earlier taken note of the high regard that the members of the RSS show for their first Sar Sangh chalak but a perusal of RSS literature gives an uneasy awareness that in doing so they show scant regard for facts or historical veracity. Reverence for a leader is understandable but if it leads to the kind of blatant distortions the cult tends to take on the character of mafia and everything becomes suspicious for an objective observer. The first thing in this regard is the total absence of reference to any ideas, current at that time, similar to those of Hedgewar about the ideology and method of Hindu Sangathan. In the next chapter we shall give details of the contribution Babarao Savarkar, the elder brother of the famous Veer Savarkar, made in the formative years of RSS and the help he rendered to Hedgewar but it finds no recognition in the Sangh literature. V.D. Savarkar's major theoretical work, *Hindutva,* does not find as much as a casual mention. References to Dr. Moonje are made in a manner as if he was not a patron but a protege of Hedgewar. How Bhai Parmanand facilitated the work of the Sangh in north India, particularly in the Sind, Panjab and Delhi is acknowledged nowhere. While it betrays deficiency of gratitude and intellectual honesty, it smacks of a deep-seated inferiority complex, a fear that if the swayamsewaks come to know of the sources of inspiration and ideology they might not have as much faith (shraddha) in Hedgewar as they have now and their loyalty may weaken.

That Hedgewar was a patriot and that all his thought and action was motivated by a burning desire for freedom is repeated so frequently that it not only clogs the narrative but also gives a feeling as if his followers think that his patriotism is doubted in non-RSS circles. They seem to think if people could be convinced of his patriotic bona fides the validity of his ideas would automatically stand proved. Such flaunting of patriotism as a substitute for rational argument makes it somewhat suspect and one is inclined to scrutinise his life with a more searching eye. We have already noted how an attempt is made to focus on association with revolutionaries but that itself raises some very legitimatic questions. If he was so thick in the revolutionary movement why is there no mention of his name in any of the accounts of those movements? It may not have been politic to reveal the connection during the life-time of Hedgewar or even till 1947 when the British rule was still there but where is the harm in making the details public after such a long passage of time? And if no worthwhile evidence is available, why perpetuate the myth? More so, when the Sangh was started ostensibly after Hedgewar had realised the futility of those activities? Is it not an attempt to romanticise the personality or to make it more attractive for the spirit of adventure in raw young men? One does not know whether the RSS loyalists realise it or not but the way they propagate this aspect of Hedgewar's personality a doubt is created in the minds of others whether he was not mixing up with these groups to spy upon them. It appears to be patently a sacrilege, an astounding suggestion to make of one who is revered by millions as a symbol of patriotism. But this is the inevitable consequence of broadcasting as truth something which is based on inadequate evidence. Unfounded eulogy always runs the risk of equally conjectural accusation. In this context one also recalls that the RSS accounts of Hedgewar's life are sometimes over-stretched to show the association of personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas with whom Hedgewar had nothing in common ideologically or organisationally. (These accounts are written in a manner as if these leaders were eager to get into the good books of the RSS chief which exhibits the operation of a kind of inferiority complex.)

We quote below the description of the first meeting between Subhas Bose and Hedgewar as given in the official biography of the latter. It took place in 1928 when Hedgewar had visited Calcutta to participate in the Congress session of that year. The RSS had not yet grown out of Nagpur and Hedgewar was no celebrity. The description runs as follows:

> "During this session Shri Subhas Chandra Bose *attracted the attention* of Doctorji. So while he was in Calcutta he met Subhas Babu and discussed the country's situation with him for about three and a half hours. Doctorji himself told about this meeting in some context nearly nine years later. In those days Subhas Babu was the Mayor of Calcutta. Doctorji had been given only three minutes for the meeting but during the interview the talk diverted to the question of national reconstruction and the two patriots carried on for three and half hours. Doctorji presented in detail his concept how the face of the country could be changed through Hindu sangathan. He heard him quietly and said at the end: "I agree that this concept of yours is thoroughly sound and rational, But the Hindu society is

almost a dead society. I don't think it can again become active and militant'.*

"Doctorji replied: "I am happy with just meeting you and it has given me utmost satisfaction to know that you agree with the Sangh concept. You only seem to consider it apparently impossible. But I have full confidence that this work would succeed.' This self-confident reply must have left a deep impression on the mind of Subhas Babu.

"A few years later it so happened that Subhas Babu was being taken as a prisoner to Calcutta via Wardha. As the signal had not been given the train stopped outside the station yard. In a nearby ground the Vijay Dashami festival of the Sangh was being performed, and the swayamsewaks were coming in a route march. Subhas Babu was deeply impressed by that march. He had never imagined that such a scene could be witnessed in India. He enquired who those people were and was told: 'This is a function of Dr. Hedgewar's Sangh.' Subhas Babu must have then recalled the confident words of Dr. Hedgewar: 'I have full confidence that this work would succeed.'

"Because of faith in the capacity of Doctorji probably Subhas Babu tried to meet him later in 1939. Subhas Babu thought that taking advantage of the World War II in Europe armed revolution should be taken up in India and a revolt against the British should be started. He wanted to see how much help could be got from Doctorji. An emissary of Subhas Babu came and met Doctorji in Nasik and later in Bombay a letter from the former was received. But at that time Doctorji was very ill with double pneumonia. So the meeting could not take place. Subhas Babu made another effort to meet Doctorji on June 20, 1940 in Nagpur itself but, on that day, his condition was serious. He came but

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* In the RSS publication *Sri Guruji: The Man and His Mission* a different reaction has been reported. According to that version Subhas Babu is reported to have remarked: "This work alone can lead the nation to regeneration."

> had to return only after seeing him asleep. If these two great and selfless patriots could come together and talk once again what would have been the result? Today it can only be imagined."*

The first General Secretary of the RSS, G.M. Huddar, has narrated a personal experience which shows the relationship in an altogether different light. He writes:

> "I had some contacts, though not of an intimate nature, with Netaji Subhas Bose. He knew me as a soldier in the International Brigade (the anti-fascist army of Spain that fought against dictatorship of Franco) and of my very personal and long-standing relationship with Dr. Hedgewar. I happened to be in Bombay after the Tripuri Congress where Netaji submitted his resignation from the Congress presidentship. One evening, he called me to his place in Bombay. One Mr. Shah, with whom I was not acquainted, was with him. Netaji asked me if I would be his emissary to Dr. Hedgewar, with whom he would like to have a talk. He asked me to go to Nasik, where Dr. Hedgewar was spending the summer with Babasaheb Ghatate, a rich *sowcar* landlord of Nagpur. Mr. Shah was to accompany me.
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> "In Nasik, Babasaheb greeted me warmly and enquired about our mission. I told him that we had come to see Doctorsaheb. Mr. Shah remained outside and I was ushered into the room where Doctorsaheb was joking and laughing with some youngsters--all volunteers of the RSS. At my request the volunteers withdrew. I broached the subject of my visit to him: 'Netaji is very anxious to have talks with you, but the purpose is not known to me.' I explained that I was not in Netaji's confidence.
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> "Doctorsaheb protested that he had been in Nasik as he was ill and was suffering from some unknown malady.

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* Bhishikar, *op.cit.*, pp. 58-59.

I entreated him not to give up this chance of an interview with a great leader of the Congress and the nationalist force in India, but he would not pay heed to me. He protested all through that he was too ill to have a talk. I suggested to him that one Mr. Shah was with me and it would be only right and advisable that he should tell him about the genuine difficulty which, after all, was only physical illness of a kind. Besides, it would help to remove any misgivings about me. Otherwise Netaji might suspect that l had a hand in sabotaging the interview. Shrewd as he was, he took the hint and stretched himself out on the bed, saying: 'Balaji, I am really very very ill and cannot stand even the strain of a short interview. Please don't ......'

"As I left the room, the RSS volunteers entered and laughter broke out again. That was that. So far as I was concerned, it proved to be the last straw on the camel's back.

"We returned to Bombay the same night, Meeting Netaji, I retailed to him the entire course of our conversation, fruitless as it proved. Thus ended the episode. This was before Netaji left India for Germany. Let it not be understood that I was in any way a confidant of Netaji. Not at all. We had come together and that was all.

"It was generally whispered in RSS circles, even to my knowledge. that Netaji had a soft corner for and an appreciation of the RSS as an organisation. On a certain occasion, when passing through Nagpur by train to Wardha, he had enquired about the RSS, which he had observed parading from the window of the train. It was said that he praised the organisation, expressing his delight and suggesting that something like this was a national necessity."*

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* Huddar, "The RSS and Netaji", *The Illustrated Weekly of India,* October 7, 1979.

We have recalled this episode because it cannot be called the invention of a fond follower. The version of the first meeting with Subhas Bose at Calcutta had been given to RSS people by Hedgewar himself, significantly full nine years after the event.* In other words, he was himself prone to giving exaggerated account of himself and his contacts, a kind of weakness for braggadocio. Why was it so? Did he lack confidence in the ideas which he propagated so that he underplayed his association with the like-minded and overstated his closeness to the publicly acclaimed patriots though ideologically at variance with him? Was it because the youth he was addressing were more impressed by the names of the Bengal revolutionaries, Gandhi and Subhas Bose than those of Savarkar, Moonje and Bhai Parmanand ? Or did he suffer from a sense of guilt which he wanted to smother by auto-suggestions of his own importance? Why? Why? Why this yarn spinning? Wouldn't the founder of the RSS be a significant enough man if he were not admired by Subhas Bose? Wouldn't he be a patriot if his association with revolutionary activities was not shown?

That Tilak had refused to lend ear to his ideas and plans of armed revolution and that all the senior nationalist leaders kept him at bay add to the intensity and importance of these questions. The Doubting Thomases find sustenance for their suspicions from such other attendant circumstances as the habit of behind-the-scenes manoeuvre which Hedgewar has gifted to his followers. It may be possible to explain all this as a complex in Hedgewar born of the unhappy circumstances of his childhood when he was forced to keep his own counsel but that it should become a basic trait of a nationwide movement can lead to unforeseen disasters. There is need for a socio-psychological study of the mental attitudes that these circumstances can and might have developed in Hedgewar. That may be helpful for not only understanding the RSS but also for correcting it. For example, there runs a strain of fear psychology, the fear of Muslims and Christians, the fear of communists, the fear of Hindus in India losing majority and the fear of other political parties and personalities exploiting the RSS for their own purposes. Why should this consuming sense of fear develop at a time when Gandhi had made the unique contribution of rendering the nation free from fear?

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* Bhishikar, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

Everybody would like to have a measure of the intellectual accomplishments of a leader who gives a new turn to thinking on history, culture, nationalism and national struggle. But one looks in vain to know the readings of Dr. Hedgewar, the details of discussions on the various problems of history, philosophy, culture, tradition or politics of the country which must have preceded his taking the ideological position that he did. His knowledge of history does not go beyond the school boy stories about the exploits of Shivaji. And the limits of his acquaintance with philosophy and literature do not go beyond the aphorisms of Samarth Ramdas. We do not come by even the names of individuals with whom he might have had any exchange of opinion at length. It would have been all right if the ideological debt to Dayanand, Aurobindo Ghosh or Savarkar had been acknowledged. Stories, like the one referred to earlier, of his convincing the people with the force of his personality may be all right for the eager unquestioning faithfuls, they do not satisfy an adult mind. To say that patriotic instinct led him to the momentous conclusions which influenced the course of history is doing less than justice to the intelligent public. To point out that it is a matter of self-experienced truth may be valid in mystic or metaphysical disputation, it cannot stand the searching light of socio-economic analysis. The life story of Hedgewar tells us of his visits to gymnasiums and akhadas but not of his visit to a library or a reading room. He is supposed to have edited a weekly and a daily newspaper but nowhere do Sangh publicists refer to any of his writings as evidence of his erudition, knowledge or analytical calibre. How was he able to evolve and construct the theoretical foundations of a movement to reverse the national political ethos as the RSS obviously aimed at? Was there some unseen force operating through Hedgewar? The question is neither malicious nor fantastic; it is another matter whether an answer can be found for it or not. The assertion that it was some inspiration or spiritual vision does not pass.

Thus we see that the founder of the RSS was an extrovert personality and had fought back the cramping effects of an unhappy childhood with a measure of success. Not a learned man but ambitious of going places on the strength of his capacity to mobilise young boys. Physical culture and combativeness were his main forte. He evinced a keenness to enter the charmed circle of the revolutionary or political elite whose names were a source of inspiration for people and that drove him to seeking the company of revolutionaries in Calcutta, of the Ramakrishna Mission and the public figures of the day in Nagpur. But he did not get much recognition except as a leader of youth groups who could stand up to the goonda element in the Muslim community. At the age of 36 he decides upon ploughing a lonely furrow and sets up an organisation of his own to which he admits young men generally below the age of 18. However, he shows extraordinary capacity for inspiring them with a religious fervour and reverence about himself and his ideas.

Chapter-V

Hedgewar's Nursery

On the Vijay Dashami (Dussehra) day in 1925 was proclaimed the birth of the organisation which later came to be known as the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. Its basic principle, rather slogan, was 'Hinduism is nationalism'.

A comment of Hedgewar reveals the mental background which led to its formation: "As a *result* of the non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi the enthusiasm in the country was cooling down and the evils in social life which that movement generated were menacingly raising their head. As the tide of national struggle came to ebb mutual ill-will and jealousies came on the surface. Personal quarrels raged all round. Conflicts between various communities had started. Brahmin-non-Brahmin conflict was nakedly on view. No organisation was integrated or united. The *yavan-snakes* (expression used for Muslims) reared on the milk of non-cooperation were provoking riots in the nation with their poisonous hissing."*

Whatever be the later embellishments, cultural or ideological, the immediate impulse behind it was the strong reaction against the Muslims and repudiation of Gandhi's approach of evolving unity among various religious communities inhabiting this land. In other words it was an attempt to foster a concept of nationalism alternative to the one which was evolving as a result of the activities of the Indian National Congress and to which Gandhi was imparting a non-sectarian, humanist and democratic content. It stood in sharp contrast in terms of mobilisation technique also. Whereas the earlier movement based its policy and appeal on the secular problems of society this new one depended almost entirely on exploiting religious sentiments and communal prejudices. An official publication of the RSS describes the origin of the organisation in the following words:

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* Quoted in C.P. Bhishikar, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

> "A change was coming over the country. The aftermath of 1921 movement had come to Doctorji as a shock. Indian Muslims had proved themselves Muslims first and Indians only secondarily so that when the Khilaphat issue was given up in Turkey, they withdrew from the allied movement of national independence. The whole atmosphere was charged with Muslim fanaticism. 'Allah-o-Akbar' and not 'Bharat Mata ki jai' was heard everywhere. Soon there were Muslim riots in Bannu, Kohat, Multan, Kanpur, Nagpur and elsewhere. 'These are not Hindu-Muslim riots' he would say, 'These are Muslim riots because in every single case it is they who start them and go on the offensive.' These riots culminated in the Moplah atrocities, completed with arson, loot, murder, rape and forced conversion. The nation was dazed. And Doctorji wondered: 'Is it Khilaphat (restoration of Khalif) or Akhilafat (catastrophe for all)?'"*

Right or wrong, warranted or not in the given circumstances, such was the perception of the founder of the RSS and his associates and on that basis they embarked upon this course of action. To quote from the same publication again, they had come to the following conclusion:

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* *Sri Guruji, the Man and his Mission,* pp. 24-25.

> "It became evident that Hindus were the nation in Bharat and that Hindutva was Rashtriyatva. While wishful thinkers pretended not to see the writing across the national political firmament, the realist in Dr. Hedgewar refused to dream up wishy-washy dreams. The truth was out. Only Hindus could free Hindusthan and they alone could save Hindu culture. Only Hindu strength could save the country. There was no escape from the logic of facts. Hindu youth had to be organised on the basis of personal character and absolute love of the motherland. There was no other way. The agony of the great soul expressed itself in the formation of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. With five friends he started the day-today programme of RSS. The great day was the auspicious Vijay Dashami day of 1925."*

Because of their peculiar propensity to exaggerate the role and greatness of Hedgewar the RSS people tend to give an impression that the entire concept of the ideology and organisation had come to the mind of the first chief fully formed as a gift of god, a divine inspiration or as a manifestation of his deep-seated and burning desire for national regeneration. Such a projection may suit the needs of an organisation modelled on mystic cults, but it does not correspond to facts.

What happened on that particular day cannot even be described as the first shakha, as an RSS shakha is known. Only five like-minded people had gathered at the residence of Hedgewar to give concrete shape to the idea of setting up an organisation which could act as a nursery of militant organisers of Hindu society. Those five persons, according to non-RSS sources, were Dr. B.S. Moonje, Dr. L.V. Paranjpe, Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, Dr. Tholkar and Babarao Savarkar. The RSS publications mention only the figure (5) and not the names perhaps because all of them were Hindu Mahasabha leaders and the RSS has been shy of owning up any relationship with the Mahasabha.

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* *Ibid.* p. 5.

These names cannot be denied because there is incontrovertible evidence to testify the veracity of the information. It is borne out by L.V. Paranjpe who wrote about this meeting in his reminiscences of Dr. Hedgewar after the latter's death.* Paranjpe had acted as Sar Sangh chalak of the RSS when Hedgewar had gone to jail in 1930. Later in 1945, Kashinath Pant Limaye, the then Maharashtra Sangh chalak, in his homage to Babarao Savarkar confirmed his presence in that meeting.** It can, of course, be argued that none of these people could be called a swayamsewak; they were only promoters. In that sense the Sangh is correct in maintaining that 'in the beginning Doctorji was the only Sangh worker'.*** They are however unfair to the promoters and other early supporters when they assert that "Doctorji undertook the responsibility for organising the Hindu society deliberately, consciously and on his own inspiration but to carry it out he had no resources, no money and no well-known leader to back it".**** It provides basis for the panegyric on Hedgewar's deep devotion to national regeneration and his determination to accomplish any task he took in hand that follows, but it throws a veil of obscurity on the first discussion which is not only relevant but significant for understanding the character of the organisation.

The meeting had taken stock of the work done by the Nagpur Hindu Mahasabha and its subsidiary organisations, the Hindu Swayamsewak Samiti and the Hindu Samrakshan Samiti in meeting the challenge of 'Muslim rowdyism' since the 1923 incident of Ganesh Peth mosque in the wake of which they had been setup. The participants had been leaders of these organisations. It was felt that whereas the challenge had been adequately met, a peculiar weakness of the educated Hindu middle class had come to light. This class did not come forward for actual combat but used the poor illiterate Hindus for the purpose. It was not only unfair to the latter but also, in the view of those leaders, made the former dependent upon them. Therefore the idea that emerged was that the educated middle class Hindus should be prepared for open confrontation and made combat-ready so that the dependence on the poorer section is reduced.

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* Daily *Kesari*, July, 5,1940.

** Weekly *Vikram*, March 31, 1945.

*** Bhishikar, *op cit., p.* 34.

*****Ibid.*, p. 33.

The trend of discussion is symptomatic of the class-orientation of the RSS and reflects the fear of middle-class leadership about the mass character that Gandhi was trying to impart to the national movement. Even today if the class character and composition of the RSS membership is analysed it will be found to be overwhelmingly middle class drawn from sections who ordinarily harbour fear about other classes and communities and seek security in group life. It is another matter that when the occasion arises very few of them are found among the fighting battalions; whether it is communal confrontation, or political conflict, the RSS men concentrate on inciting others to violence and keep themselves safe in the background.

It was also decided that the adults of the community could not be relied upon and therefore younger boys should be enlisted for the job. Whether the task was entrusted to Hedgewar or he voluntarily took it up is not very material; the upshot was that he was to be its sole incharge and the others promised necessary help. At that point it was purely a local affair. Even the idea of giving it a name did not occur, what to speak of the elaborate paraphernalia of a flag, an oath, a prayer, or any elaborate system of hierarchy or fund collection.

In pursuance of the understanding thus arrived at Hedgewar started recruiting teenage school boys mostly in the 12-15 age group. Before admitting a boy into the group he carefully scrutinised his eligibility mainly in terms of loyalty and obedience. There are instances of boys desirous of joining but rejected by him. He was developing a personal group, a militant gang which would not stand duality of allegiance either to persons or to principles. Within a short period he made arrangement for physical training of the young recruits. The venue of training was the place in Nagpur where now stands the Hedgewar Bhawan, the headquarters of the RSS. The place was then known as Salubai Mohite's *bara* and was lying vacant and unused, cluttered up with rocks and stones. To make it usable as playground the boys cleaned it up themselves under the leadership of Hedgewar. The activity at this new place, the first Sanghathan, was the real beginning of the shakha programme. Thus the de facto Sangh shakha started only in early 1926, a few months after the de jure date of birth.

The programmes and activities in which the new recruits were involved were calculated to maintain their interest and deepen their attachment to the leader, Hedgewar. He took them out for picnics, swimming and out-door activities and supervised their physical training in the shakha. The intellectual exercise consisted mainly of stories of Hindu heroes like Shivaji emphasising the bravery and the determination and sense of sacrifice displayed by them in their confrontation with their Muslim adversaries. Hedgewar continued his other social and political activities, all the time on the look out for youngsters whom he could recruit and the elders whose sympathies he could enlist for the new venture.

The activities of Hedgwar's corps were not different from similar other groups but it had a special attraction for the youth because, unlike other volunteer organisations, he did not employ his boys to do small chores for political and social organisations dominated by others. It gave them a sense of importance and independence so that they felt superior to other volunteers. Hedgewar's boys were prepared to do anything for themselves but they were at nobody's beck and call.

Thus the shape of the organisation began to develop. Hedgewar found encouraging response to the experiment. The idea had developed a local habitation and needed a name. The problem engaged his attention in the early months of 1926. A meeting was called to decide the issue and, after considerable discussion, it was decided that it should be named Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. Babarao Savarkar preferred to call it Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh particularly because the volunteer organisation setup by the

Congress at the Ahmedabad session of 1921 bore the name suggested by Hedgewar but he insisted on the word Rashtriya. He argued that it would in the first place, confuse Congressmen and secondly, signify the assertion that Hindu and Rashtriya are synonymous. Hedgewar's view prevailed and the organisation got its name on the Ram Naumi day (the birthday of Shri Ram Chandra, the Hindu god-hero of the Ramayana). A flag was also adopted which in its colour and shape is supposed to be the flag of Ram Chandra. It had been used by Shivaji also and symbolised the Hindu traditional values. A prayer, in mixed Hindi-Marathi language* had been composed and began to be recited every day at the end of the shakha programme. It ended with two slogans-(i) Rashtra guru Samarth Ramdas ki jai and (ii) Bharat mata ki jai. The preponderance of Shivaji as the ideal and hero, the flag and the prayer with its end slogan naturally gave it a Maharashtrian colouring. That is why there is a widespread opinion that the RSS aims at revival of the Peshwa rule.

The year 1927 saw the RSS taking new strides. The most important activity of the year was a two-month training camp held from April 15 to June 15. Twenty swayamsewaks were given training in the use of lathi, sword, javelin and dagger. There were also courses on PT, *surya-namaskar*, lezim etc. Games played were kabaddi and kho-kho. Lectures were held to instil in the trainees the ideas of Hindu nationalism, the futility of Gandhian methods and the disloyalty to nation on the part of Muslims and other non-Hindus. Tales about Shivaji's prowess and Rana Pratap's sacrifice as told by the British writers like Col. Todd constituted a major part of this process of indoctrination. The main burden of the whole curriculum was that the Hindus were unorganised, liberal, generous and peaceable because of which the Hindu society had suffered at the hands of non-Hindus. And the only panacea for the ills of Indian nation-which is the same thing as the Hindu society, was the binding of Hindus into a militant organisation so that others should develop an attitude of awe and respect for it. Patriotism lay in making every sacrifice to instil the fear of god in the minds of non-Hindus who were bent upon destroying Hindu society.

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* See Appendix I.

In the same year there was a riot in Nagpur. It is worthwhile quoting at length the RSS version of this incident, not only because after it the Sangh spread rapidly in and around Nagpur but also because it reflects the organisation's approach to the problem. The description given by Bhishikar first points to the general aggressiveness of the Muslim community and then goes on;

> "Stones were thrown at Doctorji's house. He was also receiving letters threatening to kill him. Tension was growing in the atmosphere. And the Muslims hatched a conspiracy to bring out a massive procession on September 4, 1927 (when the Hindus would be observing Mahalaxmi festival in their homes) and indulge in rioting. The procession was scheduled for the afternoon when the Hindus would be resting after lunch. The Sangh workers got wind of that plan and knew that the procession was going to be attended by riot. Doctorji was personally out of Nagpur on that day. The procession was to pass through Mhal area, an educated middle-class locality. On both sides of the route there were a number of narrow lanes. The processionists were equipped with lathis, javelins, knives daggers, etc. Those who wanted to indulge in violence and loot raised thunderous slogans of 'Allah-o-Akbar' and 'Deen-Deen' and attacked a house situated in one of the narrow lanes. But at the entrance itself they got a thorough beating. Thereafter they got a thrashing at every lane-entrance. Several rioters had their heads broken. The procession broke up and people began to run. The fleeing goondas beat up the lone Hindus they found on the way. After this first retaliation against the Muslim intrusion several Hindus left their lunch unfinished in anger and came out; by the evening they beat back the invaders. For three days thereafter stray incidents continued. The atmosphere remained tense but not a single Hindu locality was attacked.

The Hindu society showed a unity and militancy which inspired self-confidence."*

The author justifies this long and detailed description of the episode because it won for the RSS the confidence of the community and ushered in a new era of the Sangh work in Nagpur and other parts of the then Central Province. We have quoted it at length because the discerning reader can notice in it the outline account and pattern of all riots before and after, from the RSS point of view. The RSS training camp had preceded it and the chief was away from the place. No connection with them is recognised. What prompted the Muslims to hatch the conspiracy and how the RSS men came to know of it remains obscure. The public is kept in darkness and there is no way of ascertaining whether the RSS men themselves had decided to take advantage of the conjunction of the procession and the festival to test the effectiveness of the training received two months earlier. What they call the secret information about the conspiracy might as well be the figment of their own imagination to inflame the minds of the Hindus. The Hindus of Mhal area were not at fault and the only known manifest fault of the Muslims was to bring out the procession. Both sides must have suffered loss of life and property. The gain, on balance, accrued only to the RSS. People began to believe the RSS technique of 'offensive as the best defence' and all around it was broadcast that about 100 Hedgewar boys had repulsed the rioters.

With the success achieved in the wake of the Nagpur riot Hedgewar began to have more ambitious dreams. He thought of new methods of intensifying the devotion of swayamsewaks, to win the sympathy of prominent public men and to spread the Sangh work in other parts of India.

An important step was to start the practice of administering oath** to the swayamsewaks committing them to pledge their all for the cause of the Sangh and the all-round progress and glorification of the Hindu society. The oath-taking in a sombre ceremonial function invested the membership of the RSS with a halo of romanticism; it took on the look of a secret revolutionary society cast in the mould of the sanyasi organisation of Samarth Ramdas. All this strengthened the bonds of camaraderie among the boys. The first oath-taking ceremony was held on March 31, three-four miles outside the city of Nagpur. After administering the oath Hedgewar delivered a fiery speech about the significance of keeping the pledge: 'Life itself can be sacrificed but the plighted word cannot be betrayed' were the words of Ram Chandra, the hero of Tulsi's Ramayana. The speech was full of historical and mythological instances to highlight the importance of keeping the word.

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* Bhishikar, *op cit.*, pp. 43-44.

** For text of the oath see Appendix II.

Another programme undertaken for the first time by the Sangh was a winter camp. It was held at a place called Ambajhari, situated a few miles outside Nagpur. The entire arrangement of tents, cooking etc., was made by the swayamsewaks with their own labour. They stayed together for a week, playing games, singing songs and prayers and listening to the stories and lectures of their leader who stayed with them in the camp. This experience of living together brought all the participants closer to Hedgewar. He could see now what respect, reverence and sense of personal loyalty they had developed for him.

Hedgewar had taken care to persuade some leading citizens of Nagpur to visit the camp. It clicked very well as a method of attracting the sympathy of outsiders for the Sangh. Before that he had invited such well-known personalities as Dr. S.V. Kelkar, the Marathi lexicographer, and Vithalbhai Patel, the speaker of the Central Assembly, to visit the Sangh shakha. All the visitors expressed admiration for the smart and disciplined conduct of the shakha members; no one ever bothered to go into the ideological motives of the organisation. This practice has been effectively used to secure good conduct certificates from unsuspecting public men. It also indirectly bucks up the swayamsewaks who take the formal words of encouragement, spoken out of courtesy, to be an approval of all that they do or believe.

The swayamsewaks having been nursed and trained, Hedgewar began to think of sending them out as carriers of the Sangh infection to other parts of the country too. A small beginning was made in that direction when three of his close swayamsewaks volunteered to go to Banaras Hindu University as students and in that capacity start Sangh work there. It has been heard from quite reliable people that the expansion programme had been undertaken at the instance of, or at least with the encouragement of, well-to-do sympathisers who promised to extend financial support to such volunteers. In the BHU, for example, support was assured by Madan Mohan Malaviya himself who not only gave facilities to the students sent by Hedgewar but also, later on, provided premises within the campus for offices of the RSS. One of the three swayamsewaks who thus went to Banaras was P.B. Dani (known in Sangh circles as Bhaiyyaji) who later became the Sar Karyavah (General Secretary).

The year 1929 has a momentous importance in the history of India. Jawaharlal Nehru became the Congress President and the Congress declared complete independence as its goal. Jawaharlal's presidential address gave a new revolutionary dimension to the national struggle by placing it in the context of the world-wide struggle between the forces of imperialism and the democratic aspirations of people struggling to rid themselves of exploitation. Hedgewar who was said to have been among the promoters of an anti-capitalist resolution at Nagpur Congress in 1920 did not react to this development at all. He is also claimed to have been a strong advocate of complete independence and should as such have welcomed it with enthusiasm. So far as the historians of the RSS are concerned all this was not worthy of taking notice. For them, it seems, the only relevant parts of the history of the freedom struggle were the failure of the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements and the Hindu-Muslim conflicts that occasionally showed their ugly face.

In the history of the RSS the year is important because it gave shape to its organisational structure. The need had been felt because with the expansion of work, personality clashes and temperamental differences among the leading members began to appear. Many details are not available except that Anna Sohoni, the man who had evolved the system of physical training for RSS, had withdrawn from the organisation. A number of shakhas had been started each under a Sangh chalak. In the absence of constitutional provision about the relative authority of the various functionaries and a well-defined line of command, it was feared, fissures and tensions might grow and wreck the organisation. It was necessary to make everybody understand whose word would prevail and how decisions about policies and programmes would be taken. The organisational structure of the Sangh needed to he formalised to legitimise the line of command.

A meeting of prominent RSS workers was therefore held on November 9 and 10 to decide these issues. It decided against the 'cumbersome clap-trap of internal democracy' and opted for a contralised authority-based structure. On the suggestion of Appaji Joshi of Wardha it was decided that Hedgewar should henceforward be called Sar Sangh chalak, the supreme director. This institution was considered to be enough because all those present thought that Hedgewar who had really built the RSS brick by brick should be invested with supreme authority unchallengeable by anybody. And he could also later expand or elaborate the structure as and when required. The principle was called *Ek chalak anuvartitva* (following one leader) and was explained to the swayamsewaks by V.V. Kelkar who told them that it was on the lines of the traditional Hindu joint family system and was most appropriate for an organisation wedded to reviving and rejuvenating the Hindu way of life. It is rather difficult to distinguish it from what in modern terminology is called the 'Fuehrer' principle followed by the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany.

We have taken note of the RSS silence over the new orientation of the national movement with Jawaharlal Nehru as Congress President. But Hedgewar was shrewd enough to realise that the events of Lahore could not just be wished away. The RSS, therefore, tried to infiltrate into the mainstream while side-tracking the Nehruvian course. It could not be beyond the mind of its leadership that better relations should be established with those Congressmen who wanted to check the steps of Nehru. People of Hedgewar's way of thinking had a decade ago attempted to thwart Gandhi's path and had partly succeeded. There were no doubt rumblings of resentment over Nehru's speech although the euphoria generated by the Lahore resolution overwhelmed them. On the other hand it must have been felt that total disregard of the developments, particularly of the historic independence resolution, would immediately and totally isolate them from patriotic India.

In the circumstances, the first major step Hedgewar took after being anointed as the Sar Sangh chalak was to send a circular to all the shakhas that the Congress decision about observing January 26, 1930 as the 'Independence Day' should be complied with because it was acceptance on the part of the Indian National Congress of the RSS goal. The circular read: '-That the Indian National Congress too has adopted our goal of Independence naturally gives us immense joy. It is our duty to cooperate with any organisation working for the cause.... Therefore on the evening of 26-1-1930 all the shakhas of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh should hold rallies of swayamsewaks at their respective places and worship the national flag, that is, the Bhagwa Jhanda. Through speeches it should be explained what is the meaning of independence and why we should work with that end in view. The rallies should conclude by complimenting the Congress for accepting the goal of independence."*

The circular clarifies the attitude as well as the intention of Hedgewar who sought to make his followers believe that adoption of the goal of independence was a victory for the RSS. It should be noted that sending written circulars is not a normal practice in the RSS even today what to speak of those days of infancy. It was therefore a deliberate calculated move to allay the suspicions of public and not a spontaneous response of a patriotic mind as the disciples of Hedgewar would like us to believe.

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* Quoted in Bhishikar, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

There is no mention in the circular of the conceptual differences with the Congress but the instruction to the shakhas implies that only the Sangh concept of nationalism and national independence was to be projected; the flag to be honoured was not to be the tri-colour which had been adopted by the whole nation as the symbol of the struggle for independence. The occasion was thus to be utilised for propagation of the Sangh ideology and not the ideas that inspired the Lahore resolution on independence. Never after that first year did the RSS observe January 26 as independence day although it had become a permanent feature of the national struggle. Earlier in 1920 also it had been observed that Moonje and Hedgewar joined the civil disobedience movement started by Gandhi not to support it but to subvert the philosophy behind it.

Gandhi had launched the second civil disobedience movement in 1930 with the Salt Satyagraha and once again electrified the country. Those who differed from him tried at first to create doubts about its success saying that it would go the way of the earlier movement. Hedgewar also tried to underplay its importance by saying that satyagraha is a temporary phase and the work of the RSS is of a perennial, permanent nature. The reasoning apparently did not satisfy the people who were fired with a new enthusiasm and Hedgewar had to decide in favour of offering satyagraha. As further details of the discussions in the RSS circles are not available a parallel case of responsivist (advocates of cooperation with the British government in return for concessions as against Gandhi's non-cooperation) leaders, Bapuji Aney and Dr. Moonje, can be cited to comprehend what the likely situation would have been. D.P. Mishra, who was then a Congress activist in Nagpur and later became Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, writes:

> "The satyagraha movement of 1930 had placed the responsivists of Nagpur and Berar on the horns of a dilemma. The enthusiasm of the people in Berar made M.S. Aney realise that if they lagged behind the leadership would

> pass into the hands of Waman Rao Joshi of Amraoti and Brijlal Biyani of Akola. He joined the movement but at the same time made it clear that this 'did not mean any change of opinion on my part' in regard to responsivism. Moonje at first opposed him but when he found that M.V. Abhyankar and Poonam Chand Ranka were being lionized by the people in Nagpur division, he too had to fall in line with Aney."*

In political equations of the state Hedgewar belonged to the group of Moonje and Aney. His decision might as well have been influenced by the decision of these two persons. Aney went to jail on July 10 and Hedgewar followed him 11 days later. Nevertheless it cannot be ruled out that Hedgewar's decision was taken independently in deference to the pressure of public opinion. The fear of losing the recently acquired respectability in public could not be an ordinary pressure. It is however not fair on the part of the RSS people either to flaunt it as Hedgewar's credentials as a patriot or to prove that the RSS had participated in the struggle for independence as they do. Inspite of the words in the above-mentioned circular that 'it is our duty to cooperate with any organisation working for the cause' (of independence) it was made public that the RSS would not officially participate in the movement. So participation of Hedgewar and his associates cannot be taken to be an expression of solidarity or identification with the struggle. Had Gandhi known of their attitude he would have refused him permission to join it, he would have told Hedgewar that there could be no satyagraha with mental reservations. And Hedgewar had carried his differences along with him into jail and used the period of internment to make contacts with other satyagrahis to persuade them away from the path of Gandhi towards the Sangh shakha. He used these contacts to spread the RSS shakhas in the four districts of Vidarbha.

The RSS maintained close contacts with the Hindu Mahasabha at that time and Hedgewar continued to be one of its secretaries.

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* Mishra, D.P.. *Living an Era, Vol. I,* p. 164.

The Mahasabha leaders were invited for special lectures on the current political situation so that the response of the RSS was generally identical with their views. Hedgewar had joined the 1930 movement but not the boycott of the Simon Commission earlier to that. In 1931 after the Round Table Conference Dr Moonje was invited to the Nagpur RSS shakha to give his views about the Conference. It is well-known that he did not see eye to eye with the Gandhian path of mass struggle but preferred to outbid the Muslim League in the court of the British in the name of responsive cooperation. The speeches that Hedgewar made in those days talked of the threat to the Hindus rather than in terms of threat to India. In August that year the RSS was pressed into service to look after the session of the Hindu Mahasabha in Akola. It is they who defended the presidential procession against stone-throwing from the public.

During 1931 the RSS had new accretion of strength. Babarao Savarkar, who had been, ever since his release from prison in 1922, organising Hindu youth under the banner of Tarun Hindu Sabha, decided to merge his organisation with the RSS. The decision was prompted partly by the fact that the organisation was not working well because of his ill health and inability to undertake long tours. The work of Hedgewar's boys at Akola must have been another argument favouring the decision as he was already convinced that there should not be a multiplicity of Hindu youth organisations. As a result there was a spurt of Sangh shakhas in the then Central Provinces or CP (now the Vidarbha part of Maharashtra). Babarao was also instrumental in securing support for the RSS at Banaras. The shakha started by Dani and others was strengthened when he persuaded Bhaurao Damle, a renowned scholar, to become the Sangh chalak of Banaras.

During the following year, the Hindu Mahasabha connection opened out new avenues to carry the organisation in north and western India. At its Delhi session it passed a resolution commending the activities of the RSS and emphasing the need to spread its network all over the country. Bhai Parmanand had called an all-India Hindu youth conference (Hindu Yuvak Parishad) in Karachi. He wrote to Babarao Savarkar to bring Hedgewar to

Karachi. The Mahasabha leaders in those days had started looking upon the RSS as an extension of its politics in the sphere of youth and found Hedgewar an appropriate man for the purpose. The Karachi conference passed a resolution that 'Sangh work should be expanded all over the country'. Hedgewar stayed there for six days and had extensive discussions with the leaders as well as the youth that had gathered there mainly from Sind and Panjab provinces. The result was not very encouraging in terms of establishing shakhas because only one at Karachi could be started and that too closed down soon after. It however provided him valuable contacts with whose help the Sangh work spread in the area a few years later. Bhai Parmanand's son, Mahavir (appointed Governor of Madhya Pradesh by the BJP government in 1998), and son-in-law, Dharam Vir, provided the basic nucleus for later expansion.

Babarao Savarkar in those days used to spend part of his time in Delhi for the Mahasabha work. He helped in starting the shakha in Delhi and arranged for the stay of the Sangh organiser in the Hindu Mahasabha Bhawan there. His help, however, proved much more effective in the Maharastra area of Bombay Presidency. Savarkar invited Hedgewar to Bombay and provided him the contacts in various cities and towns of the region; he accompanied Hedgewar to many places.

During his tour of the area Hedgewar was accompanied by Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Gandhi. Curran reports: "One of his advisers on this tour was Nathuram Godse, who sixteen years later was to fire the pistol that killed Mahatma Gandhi. Godse had joined the RSS in 1930, winning prominence as a speaker and organiser, he left the Sangh in 1934 because Hedgewar refused to make the RSS a political organisation."* Though he had borrowed ideology from Hindu Mahasabha he avoided open association with it for the same reasons on the basis of which he had rejected the word Hindu from the nomenclature of his organisation. Congress had more pull with the masses and Hedgewar feared isolation if he supported Mahasabha.

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* Curran, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19

Dadarao Parmarth, a boyhood friend of Hedgewar who had joined him to work full time, was entrusted the organisational responsibility in the area. His pronounced sympathies with Mahasabha politics and the attitude of reverence towards Savarkar brothers drew for him the sympathy and support of Brahmins most of whom were proud Savarkarites. Thus he was able to create a strong base for the Sangh in that region. Poona developed into a kind of second headquarters of the RSS and by 1935 a second training camp started being held there, besides Nagpur.

These activities must have come to the notice of the Congress because several Congressmen, particularly in CP area, had started participating in them. The divergence between the Mahasabha and the Congress was growing and there was a strong feeling in Congress circles that the Sangh and Mahasabha were accentuating communal tendencies in politics. In 1932 itself the CP government had declared the activities of the Sangh communal and objectionable and prohibited the participation of government employees in its activities.

In 1933 Jamnalal Bajaj wrote a long letter to Hedgewar seeking clarification about the ideological and political stand of his organisation on the problems facing the country and the national movement. Instead of sending a written reply Hedgewar preferred a personal meeting. Bajaj met him at Nagpur but it seems the outcome was not satisfactory. In June 1934 the Congress passed a resolution forbidding members of Congress from joining the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. Later in the year, in December, there was an RSS camp at Wardha and Appaji Joshi arranged that Gandhi should pay a visit to the camp. Joshi was also a member of Congress and hoped to enlist the support of the Mahatma. The latter was not averse to the visit because he wanted to have a personal view of the organisation. The next day Hedgewar met Gandhi in person but found him rather sceptical and unimpressed. The RSS represents this meeting as a mere exchange of opinion: “There is no question of scoring points in such meetings. Leaders who talk with mutual confidence and goodwill try to understand each other’s point of view and to remove misunderstandings if there be any. Doctorji wanted that the Congress should not obstruct Sangh work. Gandhiji also wanted to know what were motivations of an organisation which brought about such amazing transformation in human thinking and behaviour, how it carried on its activities, what was its relationship with politics and what kind of a man was the Sar Sangh chalak of the RSS.”*

Obviously Gandhi was not fully satisfied because he did not advise the Congress to permit Congressmen to join the RSS. He was too shrewd not to see through the game, too honest to pay an undeserved compliment and too large hearted to grudge a person or party an opportunity for a change of heart. He kept quiet and did not oblige Hedgewar with a certificate he perhaps looked for. A very specific question which he put in that meeting was about the sources of Sangh finance. The reply, as usual, was that they depended solely and entirely on the funds collected through *guru dakshina.* There is no evidence available that this was enough to satisfy the curiosity of Gandhi but that he had heard people expressing doubts in that regard is clear from the question itself. Thus at a time when the national movement had taken new strides in the wake of the Simon Commission boycott, the 1931 Satyagraha with the attitude to total ideological confrontation with imperialism, the RSS was standing on the other side of the fence in the company of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. And there were serious apprehensions about the sources of its finance in the highest quarters. The belief was widespread that all those who opposed the freedom struggle under the leadership of the Congress were lackeys of the imperial power. It was not altogether unfounded.

It would not be wrong to conclude that the Sangh was adopting a recalcitrant anti-Congress posture because the latter was turning more and more towards the socialist ideas under the influence of

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* Bhishikar, *op. cit.*, p. 98

Jawaharlal Nehru. A regular socialist group had emerged in the form of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 and was spreading its ideas throughout the country. The presidential address of Jawaharlal at the Lucknow and Faizabad Congresses had caused widespread consternation among the conservative circles inside and outside the Congress as also in the corridors of colonial power. Whether the RSS was acting on its own conservative instinct or was being prompted by the votaries of reactionary ideologies cannot be definitely stated but Hedgewar was in those days feverishly exhorting the swayamsewaks to spread out in the country at a fast speed because 'the time is running out.

Curran reports: 'The years between 1937 and 1940 are the years of feverish expansion of the RSS work and by 1940 when Hedgewar died it had developed an all-India character. Organisers were sent into Delhi Province, the Punjab, United Provinces and Bihar. Their efforts were aided materially by the rising storm clouds of Hindu-Muslim tension that were casting a lengthening shadow over the political landscape, particularly in the northern areas. RSS propaganda became increasingly anti-Muslim, and many Hindus responded to its appeal. In 1938 there were 400 RSS centres in Maharashtra and North India, with a membership of 40,000.

> "In 1939, Dr. Hedgewar placed Sangh activities on an all India basis. In that year he directed that swayamsewaks be sent into Madras city. In 1940 organisers were sent into other large towns in the Tamilnad area. In 1939, and 1940, representatives were sent also to Belgaum, Bijapur, Hubli and Mangalore in the Karnatak region. No serious attempts were made, anywhere in the country, to proselytize outside the large towns. In the towns were the segments of society upon which the RSS was centering its attention: university students and shop-keepers and clerks of the lower-middle classes. Concentration on these groups produced results; in 1940, an RSS spokesman claimed that the number of volunteers approximated 100,000."*

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* Curran, *op cit.*, p. 19.

Another important factor that speeded up the growth of the RSS during this period was the patronage of V.D. Savarkar. Hedgewar was his admirer and had met him while he was in detention at Ratnagiri. After his release in 1937 Savarkar had plunged into the Hindu Mahasabha activity. In November 1937 he came to Akola to preside over the CP-Berar Hindu Conference held there. Hedgewar requested him to visit the RSS shakha of the town which he did.* Savarkar was happy to see the discipline and militancy and made it a point to go and speak in the Sangh shakha wherever he went. He patronised and encouraged them.** So did the other prominent leaders of the Mahasabha. S.P. Mookherjee addressed the Lahore shakha in 1940 and is reported to have said: "I see in this organisation the one silver lining in the cloudy sky of India."***

These visits, particularly of Savarkar, were a shot in the arm at a time when the national mood was averse to a sterile activity not issuing into action. Savarkar's appreciation of the RSS was considered enough of an argument to silence the impatient young men who at times pressed the question why the RSS was satisfied with a meaningless ritual when the nation was on the move. Even Mahasabhaites were militant, at least in denouncing the Muslim League and the Congress. Therefore even anti-Congress young enthusiasts pressed for some action. They were adequately silenced with the answer: 'Wait, our time has not yet come. Even the great revolutionary Savarkarji appreciates the work we are doing.'

As the RSS grew out of Maharashtra its Marathi colouring became irksome and a hindrance to expansion. One reason why after the Karachi conference of 1932 the expected expansion did not take place in north India was that Hindus who responded to the Sangh in those areas were mostly under the influence of the Arya Samaj for whom the idolatrous rituals and practices of the Sangh were an anathema. Dr. Hedgewar used to carry with him an idol of

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* Dhananjay Keer, *Life and Times of Veer Savarkar*, p. 229.

** *Ibid.* pp. 40-42.

*** Balraj Madhok, *Portrait of a Martyr*, pp. 28-29.

Hanuman and this was not liked in these circles. Necessary changes were therefore brought about; the prayer was changed to Sanskrit.* The worship of Hanuman was abandoned and insistence on showing respect to rituals was given up.

This was a major advance for the RSS. Its character underwent a transformation from regional to all-India. In his last speech to the trainees of the Nagpur OTC in 1940 Hedgewar said: 'I see before my eyes today a miniature Hindu Rashtra.' Trainees had come there from all over the country except Assam, Orissa and Jammu and Kashmir. But its ideological identification became more pronounced with the Hindu Mahasabha, a communal organisation, thus isolating it further from the mainstream of national struggle. To break this isolation it was not possible to give up the path pursued so far because it was not in the nature of the organisation. What could be done was to wean away as many young men from going over to the Congress and socialist organisations as possible by expanding the shakha network. The Muslim League resolution demanding Pakistan came as god's own gift to inject life into the RSS. Instead of defeating the League-imperialist conspiracy by adding their energy and prowess to the mass movement led by the Congress they preferred to play into their hands by becoming the other side of the communal coin.

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* Bhishikar, *op cit.*, p. 71.

Chapter-VI

Come Golwalkar

June 20, 1940. Hedgewar's condition had taken a serious turn. The doctors were making efforts to control the disease but without much success. A last desperate effort was to be made by lumbar puncture. Hedgewar felt that he might not survive the operation. He called Madhorao Golwalkar, then Sar Karyavah (General Secretary) of RSS, and handed over to him a slip of paper on which was written: "Before giving this body finally in the hands of doctors, I wanted to tell you that hereafter you look after the organisation and shoulder the whole responsibility."*

Thus succession was decided upon by Hedgewar one day before he passed away. There was no question of any murmur of dissent. He had been entrusted the sole authority over the organisation a decade ago by the same members and leaders of the RSS who could be considered eligible. The founder Sangh chalak had already more or less made it known that he would take that decision and everybody was reconciled to it. Since 1937 he had been passing on more and more responsibility to Golwalkar. The latter accompanied him on all his tours and was asked to deliver speeches in all the shakhas they visited. In those days Hedgewar's health was giving way and he was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the pressure of work which was expanding almost in direct proportion to the deterioration in his health. Golwalkar, who had been nominated the Sar Karyavah (General Secretary), was therefore called upon to handle most of the correspondence with the other centres and interviews with people; he also looked after the ailing leader besides supervising the daily routine of the RSS. He was made incharge of the training camps too. Golwalkar began to stay in those camps in place of Hedgewar who because of ill health could not stand the strain; that provided him the opportunity to establish rapport with the growing crop of Sangh activists and also to understand the mechanism through personally handling it. Golwalkar had been groomed for the job.

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* Surendra Bahadur Saxena, A *Study of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh*, a dissertation submitted to the Agra University in 1959 (unpublished), p. 24.

Who was Golwalkar? Here is a brief account of his life:

"Golwalkar was born on February 19, 1906 in a small village near Nagpur. Like the other chief figures of the RSS he is a Maharashtrian Brahmin. His father was a school teacher, who decided that he should prepare himself for a life of science. In acceding to this decision, the boy sowed the seed of a mental conflict. At an early stage in life, Golwalkar developed an avid interest in the study of spiritualism. When barely in his teens, he began to study, in his free time, the Vedas and other religious Hindu works under the guidance of the Superintendent of Schools in Nagpur. The satisfaction derived from these studies tempted him to devote his life to them, but he could not bring himself to oppose his father's desires.

"He entered Banaras Hindu University in 1924. His field of academic concentration was biology and zoology. He proved a brilliant student and received his B.Sc. degree in 1926 and his M.Sc. degree in zoology in 1928, standing first in the examination. The University soon afterwards appointed him a teacher in zoology, a position he retained until 1933. According to RSS informants, Golwalkar was a popular teacher at Banaras, where he acquired the name 'Guruji', by which he is known today among Sangh volunteers.

"Golwalkar's contacts with the RSS commenced soon after he began teaching at the University. He met Hedgewar on the latter's visit to Banaras in 1929. Golwalkar joined the Sangh in 1931. In 1933, at Hedgewar's request, he resigned his University post and returned to Nagpur to work at RSS headquarters. With Hedgewar's encouragement, he also studied law and received his LL.B. degree in 1935 from the University in Nagpur. During the next two years, he practised law while remaining active in RSS work.

"In 1937 Golwalkar left the RSS because his spiritualistic inclinations could be no longer contained. He moved to Bengal and there became a disciple of Swami Akhandanand at Sargachi. In obedience to the Swami's wishes, Golwalkar allowed his hair and beard to remain uncut, a practice he maintains to this day. His contentment with his new existence was shattered by the sudden death of the Swami, only a few months after he had joined him. Falling into a state of extreme mental depression and indecision, he returned to Nagpur to seek advice of Hedgewar.

"The RSS leader persuaded Golwalkar that his obligation towards society could be best discharged in the Sangh, which Golwalkar subsequently rejoined. Hedgewar's confidence in the younger man mounted steadily."*

Why did Hedgewar pick on this young man to head the organisation after he was gone? The RSS people provide no satisfactory answer to this question except by referring to some mysterious faculty possessed by Hedgewar for spotting the right person and then grooming him for the job. Surely that is no answer though it is in line with all the answers to all the questions put to them. Golwalkar was not the senior most or the most experienced of his colleagues. There was Appaji Joshi who had stood by him through thick and thin and had played a major role in giving shape to the Sangh structure which put all the power in Hedgewar's hands. There were Keshav Apte and Dadarao Parmarth who had given ample proof of their organisational abilities and had taken up full time Sangh work much earlier. There were people like Babarao Savarkar and Narayan Savarkar, who could be idolised by the votaries of Hindu Sangathan. Kashinath Pant Limaye and V.V. Kelkar in Poona who had been instrumental in preparing the ground for Sangh in Maharashtra were also there.

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* J.A. Curran, *op cit.*, pp. 20-21.

What was the special quality in Golwalkar that he was preferred to others? The question is important because for a cult-like organisation, which the RSS happens to be, the understanding of the personality of the leader is of fundamental importance. His devotion to the motherland or to the cause of Hindu regeneration could not be considered superior to that of all those who were bypassed. In fact, he had shown more inclination for seeking personal salvation than national independence. Till the time that he appeared as the RSS general secretary there is no evidence of his showing any interest in public life or national affairs. By temperament he was poles apart from Hedgewar. While the founder Sangh chief was an extrovert and essentially a political being, Golwalkar was more inward-looking and given to spiritualistic pursuits. Around that time Hedgewar was talking in terms of more and more activism. How did he think Golwalkar would be able to make the Sangh a potent instrument of change?

One possible explanation is that Hedgewar, sick of pulls and pressures exerted by his political patrons and seniors, wanted to hand over the reins of the organisation to a person who was not under obligation to any of them. It is well-known that he was trying to detach RSS from the Hindu Mahasabha, ironically at a time when Savarkar whom he admired a great deal was at its head. He took advantage of his personal association with Savarkar but probably resented being treated as a junior, a mere youth organiser, in the Mahasabha circles. He must also have been frustrated by the unending bickerings between Moonje and Savarkar and between Savarkar and Bhai Parmanand. There were disputes over petty matters like control over property and appointment of office-bearers. It could reasonably occur to him that the edifice he had built with so much care and sacrifice may not be sucked into the whirlpool of the quarrels of the old maids of the Mahasabha. Anybody prone to be influenced by any of the Mahasabha leaders would be a hazardous choice to head the RSS even though ideological affinity with Savarkar was the *sine qua non* of its existence.

It seems Babarao Savarkar also agreed with Hedgewar's view because he allowed himself to be exploited to build the image of Golwalkar. Most of the RSS swayamsewaks came to know him first as the author of a tract, *We or Our Nationhood Defined,* which they had seen as the first scientific presentation of the RSS theory of Hindu nationalism. This belief is held even now. For instance in the affidavit filed in the Nagpur court it has been avowed: "With a view to give scientific base to propagate the idea--India being historically from time immemorial a Hindu Nation--late Shri M.S. Golwalkar had written a book entitled *We or Our Nationhood Defined* which was published in 1938."

Apart from the fact that it was not the first exposition *of* the idea,* it was not an original work of Golwalkar either. Both the facts were later admitted by Golwalkar himself although care was taken not to broadcast them widely enough. On the occasion of V.D. Savarkar's 80th birthday in May 1963 his admirers in Bombay observed a 'militarisation week'. Golwalkar was the speaker on one of the days, May 15, when he said that he had found the principles of nationalism scientifically explained in Savarkar's great work *Hindutva.* To him it was a text book, a 'scientific book'. And he made the sensational disclosure that *We,* supposed to have been written by him, was really an abridged translation of Babarao Savarkar's Marathi treatise *Rashtra Mimansa.* This part of the speech was not found newsworthy and did not appear in the press at that time but the biographer of Savarkar, Dhananjay Keer, refers to it on the basis of the tape-recorded version of that speech. As per Keer's report "Golwalkar ..... said that the book *We* which was read by the RSS was the abridgement done by him (Golwalkar) of the work *Rashtra Mimansa* of Babarao Savarkar. He added that he had translated Babarao Savarkar's book into Hindi and handed it over to a certain man. He said that it was most befitting on his part to acknowledge publicly the debt of gratitude."*

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* V.D. Savarkar's much more comprehensive, cogent and better argued treatise *Hindutva* had been published by then although it might not have reached the swayamsewaks of the RSS.

This episode is significant as an indicator of the standards of intellectual honesty which Golwalkar observed but here it has been referred to at length to show that a deliberate attempt was made by Hedgewar and Babarao to build up the image of Golwalkar. From other sources it is learnt that Babasaheb Ghatate, the treasurer of the RSS for many years and the main financial supporter of Hedgewar, was also privy to this act which almost tantamounts to a conspiracy. It is he who gave a copy of *Rashtra Mimansa* to Golwalkar and then managed the publication of his version in English, Hindi as well as Marathi. If the Savarkars were not a party to it they could have exposed the hoax then itself because the book had already been published in 1934. On the other hand he seems to have withdrawn his own book from circulation so that no contemporary reader or critic noticed the manifest plagiarism involved and everybody hailed Golwalkar as a great thinker on the theory of nationalism.

Even after this we remain in dark about how Golwalkar came to be promoted. Who gave the tip off to Hedgewar that this man would suit his purposes? Was it somebody in Nagpur or in Banaras? Hedgewar is seen to be taking special steps to draw him close to the RSS. In 1932 he invited him as a special guest to the Vijay Dashami celebrations in Nagpur, an honour normally reserved for public celebrities whom the RSS leaders want to impress and cultivate, and Golwalkar at that time was not such a personality. He took special interest to help him take a law degree and then followed him to the point of dragging him back from the Sargachi Ashram of the Ramakrishna Mission. Why?

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* Dhananjay Keer, *op cit.*, p. 527.

There is no rational reason available. At best what can be said is that later events justify Hedgewar's choice. How far that is true is also less than certain. Would Hedgewar have liked his organisation to behave in a manner as to earn the most caustic and damaging comment from his mentor?* Would he have sat satisfied with mere verbal war against vivisection of India without bringing the RSS into the field for offering bitter resistance like the Rajput heroes of yore who are presented to the swayamsewaks as models of bravery and patriotism ? If that was the vision of Hedgewar about the role of the RSS one cannot be too sure of his own bona fides. You fill a whole community with hatred and contempt against those who either demand partition or think of conceding it (like Rajaji or the CPI) and when the British rulers decide on partition you sit quiet hurling abuses at your own people without a word against those who actually perpetrate the crime.

All this, including Hedgewar's reasons for passing the torch on to Golwalkar, would remain in the sphere of speculation. The hard fact is that Golwalkar did display extraordinary calibre as an organiser and reared the sapling handed down to him by Hedgewar into a mighty tree with branches extending into all directions of Indian life. It may not have roots and it may not yield fruit, but it casts its shadow, menacing or comforting whatever you may like to call it, over the entire nation. And the credit for this goes entirely to Golwalkar.

The major contribution which he made to the enrichment of the RSS arsenal of ideas was to develop the anti-communist, anti-socialist dimension. 'Not socialism but Hinduism' is his key slogan, as the direct descendant of Hedgewar's slogan 'Hinduism is Nationalism.' The anti-communist potential of the RSS was first noticed and assessed by an American, J.A. Curran, who after a special study of the RSS around the year 1950 came to the conclusion:

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* Savarkar said, "The epitaph for the RSS volunteer will be that he was born, he joined the RSS and be died without accomplishing anything." (Quoted by Curran, *op. cit.*, p. 21.)

> "If leftist forces in India should acquire increasing importance or if Communist imperialism should present a greater threat to India's sovereignty than the Congress Government could withstand, the RSS might stand to gain. Its extreme Hindu nationalism might easily become the rallying point for anti-Marxists."*

Perhaps it reads like an advertisement for all anti-Marxists to rally round the RSS but there is no gainsaying that Golwalkar made the organisation as much, if not more, anti-Marxist (i.e., anti-communist and anti-socialist) as it had been anti-Muslim during the lifetime of his predecessor. In that respect he stole a march over the Hindu Mahasabha which could never develop as pronounced an anti-socialist edge. With the result that all those who feared a radical social change began to look upon it as a saviour and the RSS today has become the most favoured recipient of the material blessings of all vested interests whether landlords, monopolists or imperialists. Even if the claim that the RSS is financed entirely out of the anonymous donations received in the form of *guru dakshina* may be accepted, for the sake of argument, none can deny that the scores of front organisations which have been sponsored by it after independence are considered worthy of support by most of those who can bestow largesse. And the credit for this goes entirely to Golwalkar.

When Golwalkar took over there were about 50 shakhas and 100,000 swayamsewaks. By the time of his death there were over 10,000 shakhas with a total membership of about a million. The number cannot be precise because the RSS does not observe the system of maintaining a regular record of membership, nor does it obtain any fixed membership fee which could provide the basis for calculation. Nevertheless the expansion is enormous in proportions. Besides the number of inactive swayamsewaks, those who do not attend regular shakha, runs into many more millions. The RSS has already branched out into political, social, religious, educational, labour and other fields and set up about 50 front organisations. The work of the RSS has been extended to foreign countries where overseas Hindus are enlisted into its front organisations known as the Bharatiya Swayamsewak Sangh and Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

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* Curran, *op cit.*, p. 99.

All this must have entailed lot of planning and thinking and enormous hard work. Golwalkar was always on the move. He used to tour round the country twice in a year and this he did for all the 33 years that he was Sar Sangh Chalak. Even if there were a brains trust somewhere else and he were given computerised analysis to devise strategy the importance and personal contribution of the man cannot be minimised. Credit must be given where it is due.

And yet one cannot fail to notice that a movement, an organisation, claiming to be deeply patriotic and ostensibly desirous of making India free, remained absolutely listless at a time of Indian history when momentous developments were taking place all around. When the nation pressed forward with all its might to reach the goal of complete independence, when every ounce of national energy was required to be thrown into that struggle, the RSS was acting as a dam to hold up the energies of lakhs of young men, a kind of brake on the movement.

The political aspirations of India in that period were finding expression in three main directions. Nationalist India had rallied round the Congress which had sensed that the moment of tryst with destiny was approaching and was bracing itself to meet the coming challenge and opportunity by giving a concrete form to its goal; freedom was being spelt out in terms of social transformation in the interest of common man as also the means and methods to be employed for realising those aspirations. The whole nation was sought to be moved by taking all people into confidence irrespective of religion, caste, creed, sex or language. Having come to realise the significance of India's freedom as a part of history's pressure to break the shackles of imperialism and fascism, the Congress was fast becoming, in the hands of Gandhi and Nehru, a crucible for forging a framework of national and international policies. The crisis that had overtaken the world, and, within that context, British imperialism, was not being looked upon in a spirit of bargain but as an occasion to assert India's views on democracy and freedom. The country, the youth in particular, was seething with a new awakening.

Subhas Bose had broken away from the Congress and was trying to carve out his own path to national independence. He had no major difference on objectives but was impatient with the peaceful methods which Gandhi insisted upon. Treating the enemy of the enemy as a friend, he planned to join hands with Germany, Japan and Italy or whoever responded by extending the hand of cooperation in breaking the chain of British imperialist power in India. He had, in his wisdom, postponed the decisions on the question of imparting socio-economic content to the concept of freedom till after the end of the British rule. If at all there was an equation of anti-Britishism as patriotism it was represented by Subhas in those days. Ironically enough the RSS, which in those days stoutly repudiated this view as negative and reactionary, is today posing to he a champion of Subhas Bose. The RSS motive is certainly not to praise Subhas but to denigrate Nehru. He had discussion with Jinnah and Savarkar to resolve the Hindu-Muslim problem and thus clear the way for a united Indian assault on the British power. He wanted to seek the cooperation of the RSS also and we have already noticed how Hedgewar avoided meeting him. Illness is too lame an excuse because if the motivation to cooperate with freedom fighters were strong enough Golwalkar could have been asked to have negotiations with him. Wasn't he looking after the rest of the RSS work ?

The third was the attitude of the communalists who were also operating on the opportunity syndrome that 'their peril is our opportunity' but they used it to bargain for jobs, contracts, representation etc. for their respective communities. League and Mahasabha leaders were both offering responsive cooperation to the British government on the basis of the promises they could extract from the rulers.

Of the position of the communalists, the only people standing outside the growing ranks of committed anti-imperialists, Jawaharlal Nehru has written: "There was a fundamental difference between the outlook of the Congress and that of the religious-communal organisations. Of the latter the chief were the Muslim League and its Hindu counterpart, the Hindu Mahasabha. These communal organisations, while in theory standing for India's independence, were more interested in claiming protection and special privileges for their respective groups. They had inevitably to look to the British government for such privileges, and this led them to avoid conflict with it. The Congress outlook was so tied up with India's freedom as a united nation that everything else was secondary, and this meant ceaseless conflict or friction with the British power. Indian nationalism, as represented by the Congress, opposed British imperialism. The Congress had further developed agrarian, economic and social programmes. Neither the Muslim League nor the Hindu Mahasabha had ever considered any such question or attempted to frame a programme. Socialists and Communists were of course interested in such matters and had their own programmes which they tried to push in the Congress as well as outside."*

ATTITUDE TOWARDS POLITICAL STRUGGLE

All these three segments of political India had their various perspectives according to which they acted. But there is no indication anywhere that the RSS also had a perspective. The only thing we know is that they had decided to keep themselves out and were laying more and more stress on the nonpolitical character of the organisation and broadly complied with the various restrictive orders issued by the British government. When asked not to use uniforms similar to the military uniform they changed their wear, the khaki shirt was replaced by white shirt, canvas shoes came in place of leather boots and the broad belt was altogether abandoned.

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* Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India,* pp. 595-99.

Their thinking and behaviour was hardly distinguished from that of the Hindu Mahasabha and, if the religious denomination be ignored, of the Muslim League.

Whatever the attitude of the leadership, the youth who came into the RSS did occasionally feel restive, maybe because of the general atmosphere of struggle prevailing in the country. They were told: 'We have to bide our time. The opportunity will come. We should conserve our strength for that time.' Catharsis of youthful militancy was brought about by fiery tone of speeches and occasional clashes with the Muslims. Thus the anti-British sentiment was being channeled into anti-Muslim action. So far as national struggle is concerned the RSS was not seen even on the sidelines. There were but only some stray arrests here and there because of a swayamsewak's enthusiasm or because of a local official's mistake; as soon as it was known that a person belonged to the RSS he was immediately released.

The Bombay weekly, *Blitz,* published a long report* showing that Atal Behari Vajpayee (or Bajpai) "had betrayed his revolutionary colleagues in the 1942 freedom struggle by disclosing their names to the police and apologised his way out of jail". The report gave details of the whole case and the court proceedings of the time. It also refered to an article of Atal's brother, Prem Bihari Lal Bajpai, published in *Sandesh,* the official organ of the Madhya Pradesh government, dated May 12, 1973 in which he had admitted the arrest of both himself and his brother Atal in connection with the Bateswar case. He also revealed that, on the intervention of Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, then member of the Viceroy's Council, both of them were released.

It must also be recorded that the *Blitz* was sued in courts of law by Nanaji Deshmukh and some other RSS men but the: case was dismissed. The man concerned, Atal Behari Vajpayee, himself did not either try to defend himself or file a case of defamation.

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* *Blitz,* January 26, 1974.

There are some reports of the Intelligence Bureau of that time which are relied upon by the RSS to prove, the sole conclusive proof, that it was doing its patriotic duty. In all fairness we should have a look at them. We quote from a booklet officially issued by the RSS.*

> "*Guruji's call.* The thinking of the RSS during 1942 freedom movement can be understood from the following extracts from the then (British) India Government's Intelligence Bureau papers available with the National Archives at New Delhi.
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> (1) *D Home Poll (Int.) Sec. F. No. 28/8/42 Poll. (I)* page 20 has provided an extract from the speech of Shri M.S. Golwalkar (Guruji) in an RSS training camp at Poona in April/May 1942: "On 27-4-42 he (Golwalkar) denounced those persons who render every possible assistance to the present government for their own selfish ends. On 28-4-42 he declared that the Sangh has resolved to do its duty even though the whole world goes against it and impressed on the volunteers that they must be ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the country."
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> On 3.5.42 he made an important speech-"It was not possible to get swaraj by begging it from foreigners and this could only be obtained by strength; it was therefore their duty to strengthen the Sangh. They would not waste their energy but would reserve it and would make use of it at the proper time. He said that they had nothing to do with what Japanese or the British were going to do but the question was what they should do. The opportunity for which they had been waiting so long had now come and they should utilise this to their advantage."
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> On 5-5-42 he said that he was glad to see the war taking place, as the time for their liberation was fast approaching. "They had to worship the goddess of war not by flowers

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* Chittaranjan: *Facts about RSS and Gandhi Murder - RSS and Freedom Movement; RSS and Communal Riots*, pp. 10-13.

but the sacrifice of their lives. They were not afraid of offering sacrifice to the goddess." In the same training camp of the Sangh, Dada Parmarth of Nagpur on 6-5-42 said that the opportunity for which they had waited so long had now come and they should consider the slogan 'Their difficulty is our opportunity'. They should hope for a better future and prepare for the worst.

(2) *Home Dept. Pol. F. No. 28/3/43-Poll (I)* on pages 8-9 has spelled out the objectives of the Sangh. An extract from the same says that "Another speaker at Jubbalpore hinted that the aim of the Sangh was to drive the British out of India-a -statement which is repeated by Gajjandhar of Nagpur at a private meeting in Amritsar on May 23rd. Recently an RSS organiser exhorted an audience in the Wardha District to prepare to die for India's liberation." At Gurudakshina meeting in Jubbalpore on September 12th, Baba Sahib Apte (All India Prachar Pramukh) remarked that the behaviour of the British in India was becoming intolerable and he advised his audience to prepare to free their country.

(3) E.J. Beveridge of the Home Department appended a note on the objectives of the RSS on 7-3-43. It is contained in their file no. *(Int) F. No. 28/4/42 Poll (1).* On pages. 31-32 has been cited the report of a letter which was intercepted by the said department in October 1942. It is as follows:

"A Gwalior student member (of the RSS) to a friend gave some interesting facts about the policy of the Sangh. The writer who had learnt his facts a few days previously from the Lucknow Organiser of the Sangh, stated-our late leader (Dr. Hedgewar) before his death asked all the organisers of the Sangh to make members 3 per cent in cities and 1 per cent in villages. They must be well trained. Before we do any work we must think over it minutely. He (Dr. Hedgewar) before his death also declared that in 1942 there will be a good vast revolution in India, so we must be ready for it. And now when we will organise our fixed and limited organisation for this end, we will put our steps forward for swaraj."

It is not possible tc accept the tall claims made by the RSS because the assessment of its policy and conduct given in the same report tells a different story. As for the policy, Beveridge, the official who has signed the report, thought that it was 'influenced to a considerable extent by its association with the Hindu Mahasabha' and therefore felt it necessary only to bear in mind that 'any radical change in the declared policy of the Hindu Mahasabha will probably affect the policy of the Sangh'. In other words the RSS, according to the understanding of the government, stood with those who were cooperating with them in return for concessions for their community and constituted no kind of threat as long as the Mahasabha did not change. The 'radical change', in those circumstances, could obviously be to join those who had rejected British method of trying to smother the national aspirations, even if temporarily, with a few constitutional concessions. It is by now clear beyond doubt that the 'radical change' never came.

Para 2 of the same policy assessment specifically says: "In 1939 a reliable report stated that the leaders of the Sangh were not in favour of taking part in any political activities for some years to come as they were of opinion that to take part in any such activity prematurely would mean an end of the institution. Further, the policy of the Sangh was to prepare the Hindu youth for the future struggle for freedom of the country. They had no faith in democracy and believed that freedom could be won by violence."

Thereafter there is a reference to decisions of 1940 about infiltrating into various departments of the government. The comment on this is: "This rather sensational inside account of the secret programme of the Sangh *cannot be accepted literally,* but it can be stated without exaggeration that the Sangh has been for some years working out a long-term policy of steady preparation for the attainment of its ultimate objective of Hindu supremacy." If this comment is based on the letter of the Gwalior student referred to above, it must have been made with tongue in cheek. If the arithmetic of that letter is worked out it means the RSS should not come into action till 40 lakh Hindu youth had been properly motivated and trained and the total number of RSS members at that point of time was hardly 100,000 including a large number of children below 15; the trained ones were still less. The time of action was too far away to worry the British. Rather they would be glad that Sangh was keeping at least a section of Indian youth engaged in 'harmless activity'.

Beveridge, in fact, has given a good conduct certificate to the RSS: "In pursuance of its policy of gradual development and preparation the Sangh has as a general rule taken care to *keep on the right side of the law and avoid any clash with authority.*" Only two exceptions to this general rule have been noted: "Firstly, owing to the high communal nature of the organisation it is inevitable that from time to time some of its members should have been involved in communal riots and incidents. The most recent instances occurred in March 1942, at Jalgaon in the East Khandesh District of Bombay Province, when two persons were killed and thirty seven injured. Secondly, the Sangh has given cause for complaint in the attitude towards the ban imposed in 1940 on the wearing of uniforms and the performance of drill."

It is quite clear from this that the RSS kept away from the mainstream of freedom struggle and came into action only for communal violence and in the opinion of the British authorities that was no cause for anxiety. For the second violation Beveridge takes care to mention attenuating circumstances which makes it less of an offence. "This ban", he wrote, "struck at the very core of the Sangh's existence by seeking to suppress those features of the organisation which were its chief attractions in the eyes of its youthful recruits, viz., its uniform and its parade-ground activities." He also underlined that "the official attitude of the Sangh to this ban is one of compliance with government orders" before mentioning instances of their breach. And then he offers a further explanation: "From the many instances which might be quoted it is clear that the restrictions on drill and wearing of uniforms have been publicly disregarded in several provinces. This indicates either an inability on the part of the leaders of the organisation to control their members or an attitude of resistance towards regulations which conflict with the interests of their organisation. The dangers of such an attitude are obvious."

There is no indication of the dangerous potential of the RSS as such except in the circumstances of the Hindu Mahasabha changing its policy. The dangers in the intransigence noted above relate to that only. "If at any time in the future", records Beveridge, "the Sangh or its political mentor the Hindu Mahasabha, should decide to follow a policy which would bring them into conflict with Government the leaders of the Sangh would have at their disposal large number of well disciplined and fairly well trained officers and men capable, as recent years have shown, of rapidly increasing their numbers by training fresh recruits."

The tone of Beveridge's commentary is that of an advocate on behalf of the RSS rather than that of a British official talking about a potential anti-British organisation. As a bureaucrat he does not take the risk of finally committing himself to any position but at the same time leaves the reader in no doubt about its innocuous character. For instance, the sentence following the above comment reads: "Apart from repeated disregard of the ban on drill and uniforms and occasional precipitation of communal trouble there has hitherto been nothing particularly objectionable about the Sangh's activities, but it is obvious that dangerous potentialities exist." What those potentialities are he does not even indicate. On the other hand he concludes the report by allaying the fears, if they were entertained in any quarters, about the possibility of their cooperating with the Japanese: ' It has been suggested in some quarters that the Sangh has pro-Japanese tendencies. Evidence of this is very scanty and by no means convincing. The most that can be said at present is that the Sangh might be drawn into pro-Japanese activities through its connections with the All India Hindu Mahasabha, if the latter itself initiates or develops such activities." The apprehensions on this score might have arisen because Subhas Bose had reached Japan and was preparing to raise the Indian National Army. Those who had such ideas perhaps did not know that there had been no contact between the RSS and Subhas. Beveridge perhaps knew better.

So far as the Home Department was concerned they would be satisfied only if the RSS were detached from the Mahasabha. And the break between the two did come about around the time that this report was written.*

So far the long-term plans were concerned the arithmetical projection mentioned in the letter of the Gwalior student, which is quoted with pride even in RSS publications, could take care of it. (Even today, after over a quarter century, it is at the most 0.4 per cent of the population.) The RSS thunder was no more than a distant drum pleasant to the ear for the colonial rulers.

In view of this overall assessment the strident speeches quoted in the report, and cited by RSS as testimonials of their patriotic fervour, would not even cause irritation to the British. Strong words break no bones and could be sweet music to British ears if they helped to dull the anti-British sentiment growing in the youth or divert it to the anti-Muslim direction.

The RSS was doing precisely that. It becomes all the more apparent when we look at their attitude to the demand for Pakistan. Everybody, including its chief advocate Mohammad Ali Jinnah, knew that the demand had been encouraged by the British rulers to cause disruption in the national struggle. The opponents of Pakistan therefore condemned both the British and the Muslim League, the emphasis on one or the other changing from party to party and person to person. For the Congress the British government were the main culprit and the League only a tool in their hands and for leaders like Savarkar the Muslim League was the main adversary. The latter, however, could not spare the British. The fire in the Sangh shakhas, on the other hand, was wholly against the Muslim community, with an occasional reference to Muslim League but not a word against the British, not on this count at least. The British came in for criticism not because they were imperialists but because they were Christians. Was it some divine prompting or a case of spiritual self-realisation? Objectively speaking the RSS was playing the British game, with a considerable measure of finesse and subtlety. Only an alternative sense of patriotic duty could hold back the patriotic passion which had fired the youth of India. Those young men who plunged into the struggle were physically imprisoned by the government and those who listened to the siren voice of Golwalkar were held in spiritual bondage by the RSS.

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* I know the case of at least one RSS pracharak, Hardayal Devgun, being forced out of the Sangh activity and nearly excommunicated from the Sangh circles on the charge that he was actively associating himself with Hindu Mahasabha activities which in those days consisted mainly of propaganda against the demand for Pakistan. Devgun was the RSS organiser in Ludhiana at that time. He broke from the RSS in 1943 and remained active in the Hindu Mahasabha till 1961 when be was brought into the Jana Sangh and was a Jana Sangh member of the fourth Lok Sabha (1967-71). He could not bear with the dominance of the RSS over the Jana Sangh and resigned from the party in 1974.

Far from the milling crowds clamouring for freedom the RSS was merrily growing in numbers mainly because of the growing anti-Muslim sentiment among the Hindus who lived in the Muslim majority areas. In UP which did not fall in that category it grew partly because the province had a highly articulate and aggressive Muslim leadership and also because a section of Congressmen somehow developed a notion that the RSS could be useful as a bulwark against the increasing intransigence of the Muslim League. In the eastern provinces of Bengal, Assam etc., it could not find the atmosphere congenial in spite of large Muslim population there because these areas had developed more of a revolutionary and leftist tradition than communal tradition. The numbers of shakhas doubled between 1940 and 1942 and training camps began to be held in most of the provinces, larger ones in northern provinces.

The rising crescendo of communal tension proved a boon for the RSS. Not only did recruits come trooping to shakhas, coffers also began to be filled. More and more of RSS men were getting into government services and its main base, the trading section, was prospering on the windfall profits of war years. How far and in what manner the benevolent attitude of the British government contributed to this smile of the fortune, there is no way to assess.

The British repression of the war period did, of course, help it indirectly to grow at a fast rate. The country was left leaderless after the entire Working Committee of the Congress and all the leading Congressmen, communists and socialists were clamped into prisons. The more intrepid spirits took to the path of violence and went underground and the country became a happy hunting ground for RSS recruitment. Some came to it under the mistaken notion that the shakha was another form of struggle while many were encouraged to join it by parents who found it a safe place for their wards. For unsuspecting adolescents it was a harmless expression of patriotism. The aggressiveness of the Muslim National Guards and the Khaksars of Allama Mashriqi contributed, in no small measure, to impressing on the Hindus the need for organised counteraction. Young men got into the wrong bandwagon with the purest and the best of intentions.

In 1945, it is reported, ten thousand swayamsewaks received training in the various Officers Training Camps. In the same year was laid the foundation of Hedgewar Bhawan, the RSS headquarters building which was completed in less than a year's time; its compound is spacious enough for holding an assembly of 9, 000 swayamsewaks. While the national leadership was languishing in British prisons, while people were facing hardships like the Bengal famine, the RSS leaders were happily counting the swelling shakha numbers and watching the crown of their first ever building rise.

The finest hour of the RSS came in 1946 when Jinnah's Direct Action gave them the opportunity of a lifetime. Rather than joining hands with Gandhi and the nationalist forces to defeat the partition designs, the RSS came into action to finally prove, through provocative as well as retaliatory actions, that Hindus and Muslims could not live together. Sanity had never dipped so low as in those dark days when there was a naked display of the basest human passions. The two-nation theory needed no further argument; a mighty wall of blood and tears and suspicion rose between the two major communities. Very few were able to maintain mental balance and keep long-term patriotic perspective in view.

All the talents of the RSS came into play in those days. Masses were incited and leaders were made to succumb by filling their minds with stories of diabolical Muslim plans to stage a coup and establish Muslim raj in India. Many of the leaders who had followed Gandhi were not entirely free from communal prejudice and the communally surcharged atmosphere, thick with rumours, made them vulnerable to the enticements of the sweet-tongued, earnest-looking RSS youth who would go to them and offer to sacrifice their lives for protecting their 'valuable' lives. People like Gadgil, Neogi and Baldev Singh acted in concert with Mookherjee and were able to win over Sardar Patel. Some of them were not altogether happy with the decision taken by the Congress, under Gandhi's influence, to nominate Jawaharlal Nehru as head of the government of free India. The RSS men skilfully played on the factional prejudices of some of these leaders. A number of bureaucrats also joined this game and began to feed their ministers on such stories. The RSS workers were also convinced, and I heard it from several in those days, that half the Cabinet was in their pocket because they depended on the RSS for the safety of dear life. There are still many in the RSS who treat these stories as true. It is well-nigh a miracle how Gandhi and Nehru were able to salvage the ideal of a secular India from this melee of destruction.

It is significant to note that the RSS leadership had no idea in 1947 that the British were about to quit and that India was going to be free. The stories that were being carried to the ministers of the interim government were perhaps meant only to frighten them with the prospect of the return of Muslim rule if the British quit. The political perspective of those people was better so that the effect produced was only a stronger desire to enlist RSS support for defeating the alleged designs of the Muslim League. How the mind of the RSS chief was working would be clear from the answer he gave to a question put to him at a meeting of leading swayamsewaks held before the closing of an. OTC in Phagwara (Punjab). It was the second week of August 1947. A question was put: "What would be the role of RSS. now that India is going to be free?" Golwalkar laughed his characteristic laughter full of irony and replied: "Do you believe that the British will quit? The nincompoops in whose hands they are giving the reins of government will not be able to hold on even for two months. They will go crawling on their knees to the British and ask them to kindly return. The RSS will have to continue its work as in the past." As is the practice in the RSS there was no further cross questioning and discussion on this point. Balraj Madhok was there and would probably vouch for the veracity of the incident to which I was also a witness. It gave a shock even to some dim-wit faithful like me that the RSS leadership was so self-centred and blind to reality. That they had failed to anticipate the events of 1946-47 has been admitted even by the present chief, Balasaheb Deoras. On being asked why the RSS did nothing to prevent partition of the country Deoras replied that it was because of the then leadership's failure to foresee what was coming.

Of all people why only the RSS chief should be in doubt about the final transfer of power in 1947 is a matter for research and investigation. It was certainly not for lack of political ambition--if not in the personal at least in the organisational sense. In the closed Sangh circles the possibilities of power coming to them is talked about with great relish. The word 'talked' is purposely used because 'discussed' is hardly the appropriate expression for the tete-a-tete that is called discussion in the RSS. Political discussion cannot take place among them for sheer lack of acumen. An episode narrated by a former member of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, Hemendra Nath Pandit, would illustrate this point. In a booklet containing his personal experience he writes of a discussion in Nagpur on the question of participation in politics:

"The question was being discussed on its merits but the scales were suddenly turned in favour of the no-politics school of Lala Hansraj Gupta, the Sangh chalak of Delhi. It appeared the Sangh regarded him as the authority on high politics in India's capital. He gave the meeting a cock-and-bull story that the time had come when leaders of the Central Government considered themselves unable to cope with the gigantic upheaval that loomed ahead and were therefore seriously thinking about asking the RSS to take over. According to his information, he affirmed with confidence, overtures for this purpose would be made within a week or two. He suggested that such talks might have already started, which of course he could not say definitely.

"This story seemed to have had a great effect on Shri Golwalkar. He said he was convinced that whether or not the Sangh was asked to assume powers, it was certain there would soon be a hard 'corporal tussle' with the communists for seizure. The Sangh therefore, he urged, must prepare with great haste for that eventuality. The question of parliamentary politics was dropped and Golwalkar made an appeal which sounded so much like a call to arms 'to prepare and prepare'."*

During the partition riots the RSS swayamsewaks had done some good work in organising evacuation from West Pakistan. Some Congress leaders of the Punjab like Gopi Chand Bhargava and Bhim Sain Sachar, who had developed cold feet in the face of partition problems, almost entirely gave themselves upto the RSS. On their recommendation Sardar Patel nominated the Panjab RSS chief, Rai Bahadur Dewan Badri Das, as the acting governor of Eastern Panjab and the whole work of organising relief for refugees coming from Pakistan was given to the Punjab Relief Committee which was virtually a signboard for the RSS. It gave the organisation an opportunity to establish itself as the saviour of the Hindus. With the government funds at their disposal the RSS was able to quickly set up an organisational network in the Panjab as well as in the Jammu and Kashmir state. In the latter they got active support from the Maharaja who wanted to use them against Sheikh Abdullah. The RSS responded to the friendship of the Dogra ruler on purely communal considerations and inspite of the fact that he was reluctant to accede to India. When after the accession Abdullah had been installed as Prime Minister of the state, the National Conference had raised a volunteer force, the National Militia, to put up resistance to the raiders. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, the State Home Minister, sent several complaints that the RSS men intercepted the arms being sent for them from India. There were suspicions that it was being done with the connivance of Sardar Patel.*

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* Hemendra Nath Pandit, *The End of a Dream: An Inside View of the RSS Today*, p. 44.

These successes, though not of momentous significance, probably gave them ideas and takeover of power began to be talked in Sangh circles rather widely. There were depositions before Kapoor Commission in 1969 which gave clear indications of the goings-on. Some of them gave clear hint that a coup was contemplated and preparations for it were being made with the help of some princes.** Given below are some paragraphs of the Commission's report relating to this aspect of RSS activity:

"19.59: Mr. B.B.S. Jetley witness No. 55 when recalled the second time said that he made a list of 600-700 cases against the RSS in a couple of months after independence, the charge against them being of collecting arms and attacking villages and assaulting individuals, and his recommendation was that the RSS should be banned and he went and talked to the UP Premier G.B. Pant and the Home Minister Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri. They agreed with him but they said that they would consult Sardar Patel. The movement was banned but it was after Mahatma Gandhi's murder. He was called by Sardar Patel and was told by him that it was extremely difficult to ban the RSS because he thought that the Muslims were against them and he did not want the Hindu public also to go against them. Mr. Jetley added that he told Sardar Patel that something terrible may happen. That was in October or November 1947. He also saw Mahatma Gandhi but he did not tell him this: he only brought before him the weapons seized from the RSS but he would not look at them. When he told Sardar Patel that something serious would happen, he did not mean murder of Mahatma Gandhi but it might have happened to Sardar Patel himself or to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He then said that he did not think that Sardar Patel ever attended an RSS rally in the UP. But he was not in Lucknow in May 1947 and that Sardar Patel attending any such rally before independence was quite different from doing this after he became Union Home Minister."

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* Durga Dass, *Sardar Patel Correspondence (1945-50)* Vol. I, p.152.

** See Chapter-IV.

"19.77: Delhi Police Abstract of Intelligence, dated December 8, 1947, has given an account of an annual rally of the Delhi RSS on December 7, 1947 at Ramlila Ground where 50,000 volunteers attended. The Maharaja of Alwar, Maharaja of Idar, Dr. Gokul Chand Narang, Seth Jugal Kishore Birla were amongst those present. On the arrival of Guruji M.S. Golwalkar, the Sangh flag was hoisted and there were physical exercises. Golwalkar then made speech and said that the Congress government was as ignorant about the Sangh as the previous British government. He eulogised Shivaji, Maharana Pratap and Raghunath Bhonsle. He criticised those who had started a campaign against the RSS and described the attitude of the government as un-Indian and 'Satanic'. He exhorted the volunteers to carry on the work done by the Sangh in the Panjab. He compared the attitude of government towards the Sangh in disparaging terms. He said that lot of Sangh volunteers perished in the disturbances in upholding the cause of Hindutva."

"19.78: On the 8th December there was workers' meeting where 2,500 workers were present. There Golwalkar exhorted the workers to enroll more volunteers and be prepared for guerilla warfare on the lines of Shivaji's tactics. He said the Sangh would finish Pakistan and if anybody stood in their way they will finish him also. 'No matter, whether it should be Nehru government or any other government, India,' he said, 'was no place for them to live.' 'They', he said 'had means whereby their opponents could be immediately silenced, which is highly provocative utterance if not threat of violence.' "

BAN AND RESPONSE

The communal forces over reached themselves in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948. They may have succeeded in stalling the efforts of Gandhi to undo the British mischief in partitioning the country but they had to pay a heavy price for it. The nation was shocked back to sanity, as if, and there was all-round expression of horror and abhorrence against the agencies which created the atmosphere in, which a man like Gandhi was shot.

It was a trying time for the RSS. A wave of anger swept the country. Shakhas began to be attacked and there were angry mobs intent on setting fire to the offices of RSS and the houses of its members and sympathisers. The demon of violence; turned round against those who had released it. The government was hard put to protecting the RSS men and property The Sangh leadership was careful enough to take steps to dissociate the organisation from Gandhi murder. Golwalkar sent a telegram to Prime Minister Nehru and Home Minister Patel expressing shock at the 'tragic loss of the greatest personality'. Normal routine of shakhas was suspended for 13 days 'out of respect and sense of sorrow at the tragic demise of Mahatmaji'.

How the government in those days viewed the activities of the RSS is unambiguously stated in the communique of February 4, 1948, declaring the RSS unlawful.*

The RSS decided not to resist the ban orders and to lie low for some time. The regular shakhas were disbanded but clandestine activities were carried on in the form of group meetings, group dining etc. The RSS functionaries outside the prison approached eminent personalities to win sympathy for the organisation. After his release from prison on August 6, 1948, Golwalkar started correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru. and Sardar Patel to get the ban lifted. His appeal was based on the assertion that the organisation was innocent and the charges against it were unfounded and mala fide. The plea did not work. Jawaharlal Nehru plainly wrote that he could not trust Golwalkar's word. Patel, who was more responsive, also was prepared to consider the request only if he could be convinced that the RSS had changed itself. In a bid to impress upon them the utility of his organisation Golwalkar tried to raise the communist bogey.

In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru on September 24, 1948, he wrote: "During this period, the RSS having been disbanded, the intelligent youth are rapidly falling into the snares of communism. With the alarming happenings in Burma, Indo-China, Java and other neighbouring states, we can envisage the nature of the menace. The one effective check of the RSS no longer exists. The communists had always considered the RSS as their main obstacle and had tried to denounce and vilify it. In Mahatmaji's assassination and the ban on the RSS they got their life's opportunity which they exploited to denounce the RSS and push forward their work. *News of their progress is alarming.* I hope you will consider this problem coolly and help create an atmosphere in which the RSS will be able to work honourably and help the government fight the menace-on its own cultural lines. A candid withdrawal of the charges levelled against the RSS and generous lifting of the ban imposed upon it will go a long way in bringing about the desired atmosphere."*

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* See Appendix III.

The same day another letter was sent to Sardar Patel. It carried the same plea but the language was more fervent: "Reports received from the South and the United Provinces reveal that the youths, especially the student section, has since the banning of Sangh, begun to lean more and more towards communism. Their propaganda is on the increase, it is not as if I have to give this indication of peril to you. But you will appreciate how much I have to control myself to sit idle and be a mere helpless spectator of the growth of the foreign 'isms', when I feel confident that if Sangh is allowed to come out without the least stigma and function normally, the youth can be saved to a very large extent. *I for one feel that if you with government power and we with organised cultural force combine, we can soon eliminate this menace. I* am intensely worried at the waves of victory of that foreign 'ism' which are sweeping over our neighbouring countries. It is that anxiety that makes me appeal to you with earnest urgency to create the necessary atmosphere for the functioning of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh as before."**

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* *Justice on Trial: Historic Document of Guruji-Government Correspondence,* pp. 8-9.

** *Ibid.* pp. 24-25.

While this correspondence was going on the RSS conducted a signature campaign on a memorandum pleading for removal of the ban. People were also induced to send individual letters. The campaign cannot be said to have received any popular support. Only nine lakh people signed the memorandum and the number of letters too was not more. An organisation Janadhikar Samiti was set up under the chairmanship of Acharya Kripalani and that too failed to click. It was clear to the government that the organisation evoked no sympathy among the masses. There was no pressure on the government to compel a change of policy on the RSS.

Out of desperation the RSS launched satyagraha early in December 1948. About 60,000 swayamsewaks courted arrest but that, too, seemed to have no effect either on the people or on the government. The organisation was going to pieces as the number of shakhas and sympathisers began to dwindle at an alarmingly fast rate. Within a month or so it was felt that the agitation was petering out. In this situation G.V. Ketkar,* T.R.V. Sastry,** and B.G. Khaparde*** came forward to rescue the Sangh through mediation. On their advice Golwalkar called a halt to the agitation on January 14, 1949. Negotiations continued for about seven months and ultimately the ban was lifted on July 12, 1949.# Golwalkar agreed to adopt a written constitution## which could satisfy the government that the organisation would work in the open, confine itself only to the cultural fields, maintain a regular register of members and admit minor children only with the permission of their parents or guardians.

For about a decade after 1949, the Sangh leadership busied itself with repairing the damage to the organisation. The experience of the ban had forced the realisation that the RSS could depend on no support or sympathy outside its own limited circle. Hardly anybody was prepared to voice its case in Parliament or public. There was great pressure within the Sangh that something be done to create political influence. Already in the schools, colleges and universities the RSS had started a student organisation, the Vidyarthi Parishad. Originally intended to be a substitute for the shakha it developed its own momentum and began to be looked upon as a potential alternative to the Students Federation, a pro-communist organisation. The experiment had been quite encouraging but political activity was a different matter and required maturer understanding. The conduct of the RSS leadership in the past few years and the vulnerability shown by the organisation during the period of the ban showed the poverty of calibre for political action. An attempt was, therefore, made to cultivate that section of the Congress whose sympathies had been won in the period prior to the ban. Vasantrao Oke, the smart Delhi provincial organiser, became active in that direction and according to knowledgeable Sangh circles, he had succeeded in impressing upon the anti-Nehru section of the Congress the need to cooperate with the RSS to check the leftward turn that Nehru was giving to Indian politics.

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** Leader of the Liberal Federation, Madras.

*** A former Minister of the Central Provinces.

# For Text of the Government Order see Appendix IV.

## See Appendix V.

The exit of Dr. Mookherjee from the Cabinet and the death of Sardar Patel in December 1950 put an end to whatever hopes and possibilities there were of the RSS getting the political umbrella of the Congress. Nehru was eminently succeeding as the Prime Minister of free India. Despite all the difficulties coming in the wake of partition he was able to put the country on the road to ordered and democratic development. The prestige of India was rising in the world and turbulance was yielding place to peaceful development within the country. Nehru stood high in the esteem of the people and to combat him was no child's play. In these circumstances the RSS collaborated with Dr. Mookherjee in founding a new political party, the Jana Sangh. Some senior and trusted swayamsewaks were deputed to take up political work under the leadership of Dr. Mookherjee. The Jana Sangh did not fare well in the first General Election of 1952 and, therefore, after that the RSS preferred to take a back seat.

Another major organisational projection of the period was Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. Dattopant Thengadi, who had been the RSS pracharak in Kerala, had shown some propensity for work in the trade union field. He was detailed to start a pro-RSS trade union organisation, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. Similarly a number of other front organisations were promoted.

China's hostility to India provided an opportunity for the RSS to break its isolation. Golwalkar had personally associated himself with most of the anti-China agitation since early fifties. It fitted very well with the new ideological dimension that he was imparting to the organisation. After 1957 when China's chauvinist designs began to take shape Golwalkar found the excuse not only to give vent to his anti-communist feelings but also to castigate Nehru for adopting a policy of peace towards that country.

In the wake of border clashes in the 1957-59 period, mass resentment against China grew and, under that cover, the RSS came out of hibernation. Anti-communism alone, however, does not serve the purpose of making a place in the affections of the masses unless a better socio-economic outlook is projected. The alternative to that is the old familiar strategy of communalising politics. And we see communal violence reappearing rather virulently in 1961 when there were some particularly vicious riots in Madhya Pradesh and UP. This time it was noticed that the riots were less spontaneous and more deliberate. A Congress team went to Jabbalpur, the scene of the first major holocaust after 1947, and studied the course of violence in depth. A committee which worked under the chairmanship of A.P. Jain, a senior Congress leader of liberal views, came to the conclusion that to save society from communal outrages of such magnitude organisations like the RSS should be outlawed.

No precipitate action on governmental level resulted. The shocked cogitation, in the wake of the first recrudescence of communal violence, gave rise to a movement, the All India Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, which was started by Subhadra Joshi in 1962. She had stayed in Jabalpur (MP) for restoring peace and the violent activities of the RSS came to her notice. Earlier she had worked in Delhi during the partition riots to protect the helpless Muslim population and to restore, according to the wishes of Gandhi, a sense of confidence in them. The Committee under her leadership has been working to expose the activities of the RSS. Her campaign has been a major factor in creating an awareness that the RSS is a threat to democratic and secular character of India. As a result of her efforts Parliament passed the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 1972,which intends to curb communal propaganda and activities.* While moving the Bill the then Minister of State for Home Affairs, Ram Niwas Mirdha, acknowledged the contribution of Subhadra Joshi and said: "This Bill had been brought because there was a great demand for this and I would like to particularly mention in this context Shrimati Subhadra Joshi who was not a little responsible in bringing forward this Bill as early as possible that we did. She was deeply devoted to the cause of this Bill and I think it is but fair that we all join in thanking her for the efforts she has made in making this possible and focussing the attention of the country to the menace of the communal organisations."* The RSS men in Parliament stoutly opposed the passage of the Bill because they thought it was intended against them.

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* Statement of objectives and reasons attached to that bill reads: Drills, exercises and other similar activities organised by communal and other divisive forces cause apprehension, fear or a sense of insecurity amongst members of the affected communities and also affect prejudicially the maintenance of public tranquillity. Propaganda imputing that the members of any particular community cannot be patriotic or asserting that members of any particular community should be denied or deprived of their rights as citizens of India and propaganda regarding the obligations of any class of persons, by reasons of their being members of any religious, racial, language or regional group or caste or community, would be prejudicial to the maintenance of communal harmony and to the integrity of the nation. It is therefore, considered necessary to make specific provisions in the Indian Penal Code to deal with persons engaged in such activities.

2. Though action can be taken under the existing law against individuals for activities promoting enmity or prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language etc., there is no provision for dealing effectively with an association which has for its object such objectionable activities. In order to curb the objectionable activities of such associations, which pose serious challenge to the integrity of the nation and the maintenance of harmony between different communities, it is also considered necessary to enlarge the scope of the definition of "unlawful association" in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

3. The Bill seeks to achieve the above objects.

The credit for creating awareness against the RSS may have gone to Subhadra Joshi but the RSS has to blame itself for her success. The role of the RSS in communal riots will be discussed in detail in a later chapter in this book. Suffice it to say here that people felt alarmed by the new assertion of the RSS and communalisation. of the atmosphere as a result of the various campaigns against cow-slaughter, Urdu, formation of the Malappuram District in Kerala etc., sponsored and conducted by it.

The final years of Golwalkar's life were years of new difficulties for the RSS. The country's politics was undergoing. a change to cope with which the old methods and postures were inadequate. The outlook for thc RSS was the brightest in the years immediately following the death of Jawaharlal Nehru. The one convinced and committed critic of the RSS capable of swaying and educating the masses was gone and there was none to take his place. Lal Bahadur Shastri wanted to stabilise himself by reducing the points of conflict and number of adversaries. During the last days of Nehru itself, he had initiated the process. of making peace with the RSS. It was on account of his efforts that in the Republic Day parade of 1963 a contingent of the RSS was invited to join the March Past. The practice was later discontinued in view of wide-spread criticism. Shastri was. also helpful in the plan to invite the King of Nepal to preside over an RSS function in Nagpur but it could not fructify because Nehru came to know of it in time and let it be communicated to the King that it would not be much appreciated in India.

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* See *Secular Democracy,* June 1972.

Therefore when Shastri became the Prime Minister he was hailed in the RSS circles as 'the first Indian Prime Minister'.* In his time there used to be a kind of competition between him and Gulzari Lal Nanda to win the support and blessings of people like Golwalkar and Anandmurti. I once criticised this tendency of Nanda in the presence of a minister who was his supporter and he retorted: "I have seen Shastri touching the feet of Golwalkar. Why do you pick on Nandaji for criticism?"

The war with Pakistan saw Golwalkar once again in his elements, he was much more active in the corridors of power than during the 1962 Chinese attack. It was a golden opportunity to get a foothold at the power centre. It was decided to draft volunteers of the RSS for traffic police duties at his instance. It was less help and more bother but it gave Shastri a feeling that he could mobilise public support for running the affairs of the country. How wrong is the notion that Jawaharlal's personality made everybody look a dwarf? On the contrary, he made dwarfs look man-sized.

The war was won as also peace at Tashkent. The tragic demise of Shastri was sought to be used by the RSS as an opportunity to press ahead in politics. Golwalkar started the yarn among his circle that he had asked Shastri to avoid going to Tashkent. The RSS press came out with lurid stories of some diabolical conspiracy hatched by the Russians to kill the Indian Prime Minister. The story was too big a lie to be convincing for common people. But the atmosphere of chauvinism that the war of 1965 generated proved very congenial for the growth of the RSS. The organisation came back to its feet thereafter.

On the eve of 1967 election, Golwalkar pulled off the biggest political gimmick of his life when he mobilised the various Hindu organisations to stage a massive anti-cow-slaughter demonstration outside Parliament in November 1966. This atmosphere combined with the ineptness of the Congress old guard which ruled the roost at that time brought the first major defeat for the Congress.

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* Balraj Madhok, Presidential Address at Jullundur Session of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1966.

The post-1967 election period saw many swayamsewaks occupying ministerial gaddis in several north-Indian states. With that started the practice of directly using state power to promote the cause of the RSS. It however proved counterproductive. Although it is doubtful whether the RSS people learnt any lessons Power and pelf brought internal dissensions too. The RSS leadership became more and more assertive and resentment grew in the ranks. Indira Gandhi's populism of 1969 followed by the Bangladesh victory put the RSS still more on the defensive.

By the time Golwalkar died in July 1973, the clouds were gathering round its fortune and the organisation was in a state of demoralisation.

Chapter-VII

Real Sar Sangh Chalak

Golwalkar's health was never very good, despite all the stories about his capacity of endurance and physical energy circulating among the flock of faithfuls. The reasons for Hedgewar nominating him as his successor are shrouded in mystery. What is beyond doubt is that health and physical fitness had nothing to do with it: Golwalkar is not known to have ever participated in the shakha exercises or to have undergone the rigorous OTC training although he did supervise the programrnes. If that be an indication of the character of the RSS the impression that it has anything to do with physical health should be got rid of. A man not in the pink of health as head of an organisation like the RSS is an unbelievable incongruity, according to its popular image, but that it has been so is undeniable. We have the evidence of a senior RSS officer in West Bengal who reported in 1950 that he (Golwalkar) had to be "under strict and continuous care of a physician who remains by his side for twenty-four hours day and night". He writes: "Sitting by him, one thinks he is suffering from some kind of infection attacking his shin bones with the result that he showed signs of developing bow legs. A Calcutta doctor was known to have prescribed penicillin treatment for him. Since then discussion of the subject having been a taboo in Sangh circles, no further information on this matter is now obtainable. Over and above this, Golwalkar suffers from an acute insomnia and can scarcely get any sleep at night without the aid of sedative drugs."*

The reluctance in Sangh circles to admit any such report about their chief is quite understandable because near invulnerability to human ailment is a part of the legend woven around whoever is the Param Poojaniya (the most revered) Sar Sangh Chalak. It has now been established** that during the last few years of his life his health was extremely bad and yet he continued his tours and other chores. It was kept a closely guarded secret by the top brass in order perhaps to prevent a feeling among swayamsewaks that their chief was an ordinary mortal. Any public disclosure about Golwalkar's poor health was frowned upon by the RSS establishment. I have had a personal experience of this. I reported in the *Secular Democracy* in September 1970 the doctor's diagnosis that Golwalkar was suffering from cancer. The RSS establishment dubbed it as an expression of malice on my part. Later in 1973 a few months before his death Balraj Madhok, after a meeting with Golwalkar in Nagpur, gave out that his health was a matter of anxiety. Promptly the editor of the *Organiser* published a report, based on 'personal interview', that Madhok's report was false and mischievous, if not malicious.

All this has to be borne in mind because such behaviour is a significant indicator about the character of the RSS. We have dwelt upon this at some length in the present context because it is related to the question of succession. Secrecy about the health of a leader is maintained either in totalitarian regimes where the change of leadership is likely to result in total change of policy or in top establishments of religious cults where those in line of succession are likely to stage nights of long knives, or in a mafia where the declaration about the physical incapacity of the leader is feared to disrupt operations.

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* Hemendra Nath Pandit, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
The author was a full-time worker, member of the Akhil Bharat Pratinidhi Sabha and the founder-editor of the Bengali weekly organ of the RSS.

** Numerous episodes about it are narrated by senior RSS functionaries in *Shri Guruji, Samagra Darshan,* a publication in several volumes, of Golwalkar's speeches and activities.

The ill health of the chief has played a significant role in the RSS process of succession. Golwalkar got the gaddi because he became a constant companion of Hedgewar from 1937 onwards, a point of time when the latter's health began to fail. Madhukar Dattatreya (Bala Saheb) Deoras who was the seniormost of the group reared by the founder might have felt piqued by an outsider grabbing the supreme position. Rather than making an issue of it he began to strengthen his grip over the expanding organisation. The levers of control had come to his hand during the life time of Hedgewar itself. Unlike his contemporaries of the founding days Deoras preferred to stay at the Nagpur headquarters rather than going out to the provinces. Organisers *(pracharaks* in the RSS parlance) were selected and sent everywhere from Nagpur; even those belonging to other places served apprenticeship at the headquarters before taking up the responsibility. Deoras, therefore, held the keys to the whole machine. As a result it was always understood that he would take over after Golwalkar. Pandit described him as 'Golwalkar's first deputy' and wrote: "He is believed to be the most capable man in the Sangh and is often mentioned as Golwalkar's likely successor."* The elevation of Deoras, as such, was no surprise. He had virtually been the chief, at least since 1970 if not earlier. The only thing that could have prevented it was the rather indifferent state of his own health. He, being a diabetic, might not have been considered the best choice to head the organisation in the stormy times ahead. But could Golwalkar freely exercise his right to nominate the successor?

The speculation is occasioned by the fears entertained by Golwalkar about the future of the RSS which find reflection in his last speech:

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* Pandit, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

> "Now we have to think of one thing, and it is this: whether a particular man lives or not, that fact is not going to affect adversely the future of the organisation. But the history of institutions in our country, modern and ancient, proves that institutions flourish for some time and carry on their work smoothly. Afterwards, differences in respect of principles are in fact uncommon. The differences are more between individuals *qua* individuals, than between their professed principles." What was weighing on his mind was the expulsion of Balraj Madhok from the primary membership of the Jana Sangh. Madhok had been a swayamsewak of long standing and was among those who did the preliminary groundwork for setting up the political wing of the RSS. He made it clear: "People say that all organisations, including the Congress have disintegrated. Only the Jana Sangh has preserved its unity. But now some people are gloating over the fact that an old worker of that organisation had to be expelled from it. These people are now nourishing the hope that since the workers of the Jana Sangh have had associations with the RSS in the past this sort of thing in the Jana Sangh will, by and by, creep into the RSS also. They are hoping that some day there will .be a similar split in the RSS."

Even as there cannot be smoke without fire, the anxiety about disintegration could not be entirely imaginary or hypothetical. Golwalkar talked of the Jana Sangh phenomenon invading the RSS because of the 'past' associations of the two. Everyone knows that the associations are not 'past', they are very much 'present'. The only thing that is not publicly known is that a large section of the RSS rank and file find itself closer to the ideological-political position of Madhok than of those who served on him the expulsion order. Even an important person in the top echelons, Eknath Ranade, is said to have held views similar to Madhok's. Ranade's attempts to set up a missionary organisation of youth with the funds collected through the Vivekanand Memorial Society was another headache because he had not subjected himself to the discipline and control of the dominant group in the RSS. There were and there are, indeed, people who considered Ranade more deserving of the highest post. Certainly it was these things in Golwalkar's mind when he talked of differences 'between individuals *qua* individuals'.

Even though the death of Golwalkar was not an unexpected happening it gave a stunning shock to the members of the organisation. Ever since the detection of the fell disease he suffered from three years earlier, the men in top echelons of the RSS had been preparing for the eventuality. The question of succession had been sorted out and the insiders knew that M.D. Deoras would be the chief after Golwalkar, although in keeping with the tradition and character of the organisation it was kept a closely guarded secret. The policies and postures of the RSS are contingent upon the personality and predilection of its chief. Golwalkar had taken over the organisation at a time when its main concern was to keep the Hindu masses away from political activity which in those days was essentially anti-imperialist. He had, therefore, developed the art of giving a religio-philosophical ring to his pronouncements and of pushing his trusted men into the administration and other political parties. The former aspect of the art made RSS attractive for that section of the Hindu middle-class which seeks a sense of identity and security in the outer trappings of religion. It also provided an ideal camouflage of culture for the basically political designs of the RSS both before and after independence. The latter activity created pockets of sympathy in various political parties and in the government so that inspite of total disapproval at the higher ideological political level the organisation was able to find fellow-travellers. in almost every situation, may it be the post-Gandhi murder popular revulsion or the popular anger consequent upon riots in Gujarat and Maharashtra. In his last days Golwalkar made frantic efforts to soften the attitude of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi towards the RSS so that the operation infiltration (which he wanted to step up in view of the Congress developing a new orientation) could be facilitated.

Deoras was a different kettle of fish. He has been more of a machine operator and had been controlling the organisation, ever since the days of Hedgewar. It is not accidental that in his first major pronouncement on July 4 at Nagpur he based his optimism about the future of the RSS not so much on its 'Sanatan philosophy' as was the wont of his predecessor but on the 'army of workers which would be the envy of gods'.

The change of leadership forced on an outfit like the RSS brings in its trail many a problem, particularly for the new incumbent. Not only has he to make himself acceptable to those who have been brought up in an atmosphere of blind faith in somebody else but has also to displace the predecessor in the minds and affections of the followers. His position resembles that of one who marries a widow who was more than inclined to commit *sati*. The incoming Sar Sangh Chalak and his establishment were, therefore, constrained to adopt a strategy which would, on the one hand, bring out the weaknesses of his predecessor and, on the other, show that the new chief better represented the ethos of the organisation.

The strategy came into operation immediately as the mourning rituals came to a close. A personality sketch published by the RSS papers started with a sentence reportedly uttered by Golwalkar at the time of assuming charge of the organisation in 1940. Referring to Balasaheb Deoras he was reported to have said: "If you want to see Dr. Hedgewar, look at him." A founder-member of RSS and Sangh Chalak of Vidarbha, Appaji Joshi, buttressed this image-building with the following 'anecdote': "On the first monthly Shraadha day of late Dr. Hedgewar, a meeting of workers from all over the country was held. Shri Guruji was presiding over it and some people were being introduced. When the time came to introduce Shri Balasaheb Deoras it was found that he was not in the meeting. He was in the mess, busy making arrangements for a timely meal for all the assembled workers. Shri Guruji said: 'The real Sar Sangh chalak is in the mess. I am the Sar Sangh Chalak only in the name, so call him first'."

The anecdote is obviously an image-building gimmick because knowledgeable insiders gave another explanation of the use of the words 'the real Sar Sangh Chalak'. Golwalkar and Deoras were both close to Hedgewar, Deoras being the senior swayamsewak and in effective control over the steering wheel of the organisation, the former had felt compelled to keep him in good humour. Deoras had asserted himself with nonchalance of behaviour. Absence from the first meeting after the takeover by Golwalkar as Sar Sangh Chalak cannot be explained away by innocent anxiety to supervise the kitchen; it is a breach of discipline in an outfit like the RSS.

The description of Deoras as the replica of Hedgewar was more significant than as a purely image-building exercise. It was the announcement of a major departure of approach towards Sangh work and the ascendance of those who had earlier been unhappy with Golwalkar for making the RSS politically sterile. It was said that Golwalkar had spread the organisation wide but had failed to make it politically effective as Hedgewar would have liked it to be. Deoras himself is said to belong to this category of critics. Immediately after independence when a debate had raged within the RSS over the organisation taking a direct hand in politics he was on the side of Vasant Krishna Oke and other strong advocates of direct intervention in politics. When Oke was indicted by Golwalkar for having developed 'ambition unworthy of a swayamsewak' and pushed out of the RSS, Deoras also had retired from active organisational work. Significantly Oke found an important place among the top men of Deoras establishment.

An interview with Deoras by the Bombay correspondent of the *Organiser* also falls into this pattern. A question had been sharply put: "..... it is surprising that in spite of having such an organised force of young men at its disposal the Sangh did not make any attempt to resist partition. Had not the higher circles in the Sangh given any thought to how partition could be stopped? Did senior Sangh workers like you prepare any plan to resist partition ?" In reply to this Deoras said: *"It must be frankly admitted that senior workers of the Sangh had not given thought to the possible undesirable effects of partition on the future of the country. Nor had the Sangh prepared any plan to stop it. We were taken by surprise. We may even say that we fell short in comprehensive thinking."*

The reply has extraordinary significance in the sense that it contains an indictment of the leadership at the time of partition. It cannot be mistaken for self-criticism because Deoras did not, at that time, hold the reins of the RSS. At another place in the same interview Deoras hinted at the disillusionment about RSS programmes. "It must certainly be admitted", says he, "that the younger class (precise use of language not being a part of RSS discipline one should not mind the RSS chief using the word 'class' for 'section') is not as much attracted towards the programme of the Sangh as the older generation and we are also thinking about changing them in order to attract young people in larger and larger number." It clearly implies that Golwalkar was unable to bring the organisation in tune with the needs of changing circumstances.

Deoras started taking steps towards making the organisation capable of political action. The old hierarchical structure was brought in line with the electoral constituency divisions. Each RSS district would cover one or two parliamentary constituencies. Below that came the Assembly and Municipal constituency divisions. These echelons were made responsible for providing the election machinery from time to time. The shakhas were geared to be the basic centre not only for elections to legislatures but also for managing elections of various trade unions, student unions and other socio-cultural organisations working within their respective areas. The first manifestation of the new orientation was seen in the Delhi University Students Union and Teachers Union elections in 1973 itself when shakha pramukhs in various areas conducted vigorous man-to-man contact campaign to secure votes for the RSS nominees. No longer just a play ground the shakha came to be the coordinaton centre of all variety of activities by different members of the Sangh Pariwar.

The division of work between the RSS and its front organisations henceforth would be that the latter would concentrate on propaganda while the ground organisation would be controlled and manned by the RSS. Naturally enough in the selection of candidates and office-bearers the RSS would have a much more direct say than it hitherto had. The changes also corresponded to a strong feeling among the RSS whole-timers that some people were enjoying the fruits of political power at the cost of hard work put in by them. Several of the RSS whole-timers had expressed a sense of disappointment and frustration that despite having put in years of hard work they were unable to do anything for themselves while some of their colleagues had gained both prominence and prosperity by entring politics.

Another major trouble that had come up before the RSS leadership during the previous few years was with regard to unmarried whole-time workers *(pracharaks)*. There had been several instances of these people conducting themselves in a manner that brought no credit to the organisation which lays so much stress on personal character and behaviour. In some cases the *pracharaks* staying with prominent citizens in various states and districts had developed uncalled for intimacy with members of those families and that had caused great harm to the organisation and its reputation. It was possible to suppress the news about these mishaps but it was not possible to stop such happenings altogether. According to insiders such incidents had caused a lot of worry to the previous Sar Sangh Chalak as well. The new chief, recognising the risks involved in long years of celibacy, started the practice that unmarried whole-time workers or *pracharaks* should be put to work for a period of two years only. He also encouraged married men taking up full-time work. This new system naturally created problems of more finance because the allowance for such workers had to be much more than what had been required for unmarried young men. To tackle this problem he prepared an elaborate plan to secure control over educational and other institutions where the full-time workers could be given employment without any cost to the RSS as such. This practice had been started earlier too when after 1967 elections Sangh Swayamsewaks acquired charge of education in SVD governments that had replaced Congress in several states. It got further impetus with the formation of Janata Party governments after 1977 elections.

The system of fund collection was also changed. In the past there used to be collection through *guru dakshina* once in a year where each swayamsewak made his offering without anybody knowing it. Now a system was introduced whereby the head of a shakha would come to know what contribution had been made by whom. One effect of this was that the collection in areas where Jana Sangh happened to be in power was more than in other areas. For instance, the six-monthly collection in Delhi in 1974 was Rs 4 lakhs while in Panjab it was Rs 2 lakhs only. Delhi municipal corporation was then under Jana Sangh control and it was the most powerful institution in the capital city.

While toning up the organisation Deoras must have been conscious of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the country's situation. In the preceding one decade the communal character of the RSS had got thoroughly exposed with scores of pamphlets brought out by the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee (Committee to Combat Communalism) which for the first time removed the veil from its thinking and practice. Important leaders of all the parties had taken up the refrain of demanding ban on RSS activities. The attitude of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, contributed a good deal to creating that atmosphere. After the Congress split in 1969 she always referred to the role of the RSS in connection with communal riots. The All India Congress Committee had passed a resolution in June 1970 saying that "organisations like the RSS and Jamaat-e-Islami have no place in our secular, democratic polity" and recommending that the government should curb their activities. Other parties were also adopting a similar stand on the question; the RSS was facing the worst kind of isolation. The national press, which had for long years after the murder of Gandhi preferred to maintain silence about the RSS, started analysing its character and exposing it as a 'para-military', 'fascist' and communal organisation out to take the country backward towards the cowdung age.

Golwalkar's efforts to meet Indira Gandhi and propitiate her through flattery had produced no effect. The leaders of its political arm, the Jana Sangh, had paid fulsome tributes to the wisdom and sagacity of the then Prime Minister in handling the Bangladesh crisis but drew a blank in terms of response. The demand for declaring the RSS illegal was rising to a crescendo and the ban appeared on the horizon as a distinct possibility. Late in 1973 and in early 1974 reports were circulating in the capital that the measure was under active consideration of the Home Ministry. The appearance of the Home Minister and the Prime Minister at the Sixth National Conference of the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, which had all these years been spearheading the campaign for ban on communal organisations like the RSS and Jamaat-eIslami, further strengthened the fears in RSS circles. The Prime Minister gave indication of her mind when she said that the government had been weighing the pros and cons of the question far too long, that it was high time to clinch it. The effect of all this on the RSS was tremendously demoralising and the attendance in daily shakhas began to fall sharply. There were fears that the RSS may crack under the pressure and may lose the battle even before a shot was fired.

The possibility of finding a *modus vivendi* with Indira Gandhi having disappeared, the RSS was left with no option but to give up its old style of working away from the scene of political contention. It had to take up cudgels against the ruling party. Besides, the policy of the government under Indira Gandhi was becoming more and more leftist, what with nationalisation of banks, abolition of privy purses, takeover of coal-mines and of wholesale trade in food grains. In foreign affairs too long leftward strides had been taken. Not only was cooperation with socialist countries in the field of economy and defence increasing at a rapid pace but a long-term Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation had been signed with the USSR in 1971; in 1973 Leonid Brezhnev had paid a visit to India in the midst of euphoric, tumultuous scenes of welcome and friendship. The tilt in pragmatism at home and non-alignment abroad was too uncomfortable to be quietly borne. Whether Deoras recalled Curran's thesis about the role of the RSS or not, the course of action he adopted reminds one of the US officer's words which, being so strikingly pertinent, bear repetition: "If leftist forces in India should acquire increasing importance or if communist imperialism should present a greater threat to India's sovereignty than the Congress government could withstand, the RSS might stand to gain. Its extreme Hindu nationalism might easily become the rallying point for anti-Marxists."

The country was standing at the cross-roads. The euphoria over the Bangladesh victory had abated and the economic problems had come to the fore. Negotiations had been started with Bhutto for the return of territories and prisoners-of-war and the first strains in the relations with Bangladesh had started appearing--developments welcome to the chauvinist hearts as a much-needed opportunity; they had been forced to nosedive when Pakistan broke up giving a hard knock to the theory of religion-based nationalism. The rise in oil prices in the wake of the 1973 war cast its shadow on India too. The price situation was further aggravated by the failure of the monsoon and the growing unrest in the industrial sector leading to strikes and lock-outs. With prices rising and production falling there was a severe strain on the common man.

That was the opportunity for Deoras and his men. Quite expectedly, he gave out instructions to utilise the mass discontent for discrediting the adversary Indira Gandhi and to win the sympathy of the masses. The new mood found expression in the resolutions and speeches at the Kanpur session of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The furies of the RSS front organisations were let loose. The Vidyrathi Parishad joined the Nav Nirman movement in Gujarat which brought down the Chimanbhai Patel government there. And the role of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh in aggravating the conflict between the government and railway men was of no mean order.

To talk of youth power as the instrument of social change became the refrain of the opposition politicians whose frustration was touching new depths because of the skilful management of politics by Indira Gandhi. She was getting away with everything from Maruti car to court judgements, playing ducks and drakes with the system. The estrangement between Indira Gandhi and Jaya Prakash Narayan which started around 1969 had also reached the point of no return. JP was spoiling for a fight but did not have the necessary wherewithal in terms of organisation. The socialists, his old comrades, were not strong enough and the communists could not entirely agree with the social perspective he was projecting.

That provided the opportunity to the RSS and Nanaji Deshmukh, a senior RSS leader, pitched his tent in JP's parlour. There were people around JP who were not altogether happy with the RSS but Nanaji dispelled all apprehensions with bold and uninhibited assurances on all scores. He was disarmingly amiable in dealing with people, even opponents and was treated in RSS circles as a model of *vyavhar kushalta* (skilful social behaviour). The RSS, he was told, would learn from mass struggle, an opportunity it was availing for the first time in its history and its communal character would undergo a change. 'Why not give them a chance?' thought JP and, in his abounding generosity, went to the extent of retracting all the opinions he had been expressing since 1948 when, after Gandhi's murder, he had demanded a ban on the RSS and had castigated Sardar Patel for being soft to the Sangh. In a syndicated article JP wrote that his earlier assessment of the Sardar was unfair and, to the mighty joy of the RSS, he told the Jana Sangh session in Delhi: "If you are fascists, I too am a fascist."

No achievement of the RSS career has been greater and more significant. JP who had been known for a keen awareness of social processes got converted to the RSS thesis that all the evils afflicting the nation resulted from the crisis of character at the top. He had travelled a long distance from Marxism to the RSS via democratic socialism and Sarvodaya. Nanaji had acquired his confidence for Deoras. Of course, he realised later that once again his hatred of Indira Gandhi's pro-communist posture had taken the better of his reason. By the time the realisation started dawning on his tired thinking apparatus it was too late.

In this context the first public address of Deoras in Delhi (1974) is worthy of note. It was remarkable in many ways. Unlike his predecessor he did not go into the religio-cultural rigmarole and came straight to the politico-economic scene of the country after the first few formal preliminary remarks. He talked of price-rise and corruption quoting the phrases most favourite with the people in power-'hard days ahead, critical days ahead'. Taking note of the various explanations--world situation, expenditure on war, failure of monsoon etc.--he said, "This sort of thinking is wrong. After all the challenge of the situation has to be accepted if the country has to go ahead. We all must understand that nations make progress in spite of the adversity of circumstances. It is no use giving explanations ."

From this he went on to deal with complaints against the trading class and bureaucracy. On both counts he held the ruling party guilty because it extorted donations from the traders and used bureaucrats for their personal and partisan purposes. He also echoed the current criticism that Indira Gandhi was rendering people *of* her party 'cringing and craven'. And he presented the conclusion that the change in situation could be brought about only by people's power. So, it was an invocation of people's power, *lok shakti,* without any social analysis. Echoes of fascist demagogy! He was refreshingly candid and uninhibited in his criticism, not hesitating to name the persons in his mind. It was in striking contrast from Golwalkar who never mentioned any names even when using the severest expression of disparagement. Deoras' was the voice of a politician.

Later on Deoras likened JP to the rishis and munis of yore who used to leave the peace and calm of the Himalayan retreats to save the people from calamities of misrule. The RSS went whole hog into the movement which culminated in the imposition of the emergency on June 25, 1975.

The role of the RSS during the emergency has been a matter of great controversy, the RSS claiming to be the real David against the Emergency Goliath while many of their jail companions later called them men of straw. The RSS men had an advantage over their colleagues in the JP movement as they had contacts at many levels of the administration and their RSS shakhas working outside India which had developed 'useful' contacts. On account of this the RSS people received advance information about the decision to impose the Emergency and consequent arrests well in time and went underground. The branches abroad immediately took up the campaign against the Emergency regime and unleashed highly exaggerated propaganda about its atrocities. The RSS network came handy even for the work of running Sangharsh Samitis.

However the RSS men did not turn out to be all that heroic and steadfast, the claims to undaunted spirit of sacrifice notwithstanding. Only those who had the means and hoped to gain from struggle remained active and, of course, the full-time *pracharaks*. Outside India there was plenty of shelter and still more money from all kinds of sources, both Indian and non-Indian. The period of Emergency was therefore utilised for building an organisation, Friends of India Society International, another front organisation combining the roles of the Bharatiya Swayamsewak Sangh* and Vishwa Hindu Parishad. With such vast organisational network and availability of resources if they were not able to make things hot for the regime it only means that the organisation was not trained for any kind of revolutionary or radical activity. The men of whom the RSS is proud were the most disappointing. Quite a few scurried around to buy protection from possible arrest and a remarkably large number gave in writing declaring dissociation from the RSS and the Jana Sangh. If such is the human character that half a century of culturisation had produced, is it something to be proud of ?

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* The name of the RSS outside India.

The swayamsewaks were able to accomplish only one thing with skill and that was to infiltrate into Sanjay's Youth Congress.* Even Indira Gandhi later admitted that there had been large-scale infiltration of RSS men in the Youth Congress ranks. Apart from the question who should share the blame for it, it has also to be considered whether the RSS boys had taken to that course as a stratagem to sabotage the regime or as an alternative to the RSS for being on the right side of authority. Also, would they have succeeded if Sanjay himself were not keen to take over the RSS boys into his own outfit with which he sought to replace the Congress. There are reasons to believe that even the RSS leaders were of the opinion that Sanjay, with his confirmed enmity towards communists and opposition to measures like nationalisation, was nearer to their own ideology and politics. Didn't he say that he had learnt politics from Shraddhanand of *Shuddhi* fame? Didn't Indira Gandhi go to Haldighati and praise Rana Pratap in the RSS style under his influence ? Didn't Sanjay issue instructions that Muslims and Harijans should be special target for forced sterilisation and, if they created trouble, they should be taught a lesson ? Didn't he clear the pavements so that shopkeepers could carry on their business unhindered by pavement hawkers? Didn't he throw out the shanty-dwellers and squatters outside the city limits and accomplish efficiently what the Jana Sangh administration wanted to do in 1967 but could not ? What the RSS wanted to do he was doing better. Thus went the justification. And there were regular contacts of authorised RSS representatives with authorised representatives of Indira Gandhi. Why, after all, had Saklecha of Madhya Pradesh been kept on parole for 19 months if not to act as a go-between for negotiations ?

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* Sanjay was the younger son of Indira Gandhi, an impetuous and brash young man, who is known to have been the source and patron of most atrocities during the Emergency. He died in an aircrash while himself trying aerobatics in a plane. His widow, Maneka Gandhi, is now a member of the BJP-led coalition government.

The behaviour of those who had been imprisoned was no better. According to Madhu Limaye, who was in Raipur jail, never before had there been such a melancholy spectacle of chicken-heartedness, so many political prisoners cringing to secure release. A graphic account of their behaviour inside prisons is given by a socialist leader of Maharashtra, Baba Adhav, who was in Yervada jail where Balasaheb Deoras also had been detained. Castigating Deoras and his men for indulging in self-praise, he wrote, "Demonstration of self-eulogisation is all-pervading. But are the claims made by the RSS true? Though among the detenus under MISA the number of RSS men was large, many Sanghites proclaimed that they were detained though they had no connection either with the anti-emergency agitation or JP's movement.

"In fact, many of them upheld the emergency rule. 'JP has instigated the armed forces', they used to tell in their jail 'boudhik'. There was in effect no opposition to Indira-Sanjay politics, certainly not from their side. In fact, Sanjay Gandhi's anti-communist, laissez-faire and authoritarian views were hailed by them.

"The pro-Sangh daily of Poona, *Tarun Bharat,* had made consistent efforts to hail Sanjay Gandhi. Their only regret was that, instead of accepting the cooperation of the RSS to implement the 20-point programme, the organisation was banned. There were severe attacks by Indira Gandhi not only on the RSS but also the educational institutions run by them. Poor Sanghites were feeling restless over this, and their 'ideological' doldrum was indeed pathetic."

In April 1977 Deoras had been accorded a reception in which all the Delhi MPs joined to greet him with folded hands. Addressing the gathering he said: "The ban and imprisonment has been regarded by the Sangh as a blessing in disguise as this sojourn (in jail) has helped in dispelling many misgivings about the RSS which has proved beneficial to national unity of the new party. During this period the courage with which the RSS resisted the insults inflicted upon it was remarkable."

Baba Adhav takes note of this and comments: "It is surprising that Deoras should say that Sangh workers had not surrendered. I do not know about the prisons elsewhere, but at Yervada and other jails in Maharashtra I know what happened. There used to be several meetings, debates and discussions. Also there was a lot of correspondence. The chief Deoras had good deal of correspondence* with the former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, former Maharashtra Chief Minister Shankarrao Chavan, Vinoba Bhave and close associates of Sanjay Gandhi. In a press conference at Delhi he confessed about the two letters sent to Indira Gandhi. Journalists might have seen the copies of those letters. Balasaheb has sent one letter to Indira Gandhi on her birthday and another congratulating her on her exoneration by the Supreme Court.

"For felicitating her on birthday one should not berate Deoras, but what about the sin of congratulating her for arbitrarily amending the Constitution and 'managing success at the Supreme Court' ? Throughout the period of his detention Deoras was desperate to have a dialogue and an interview with Indira Gandhi. As far as I know, he contacted many people including the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra for this.

"In February 1976, Indira Gandhi visited Bombay and in order to meet her, he got himself moved to St. George Hospital (Bombay), pretending illness. Through Shankarrao Chavan, an effort was made to see her, failing which a meeting with Shankarrao Chavan was sought by one Jana Sangh MLA outside the jail. However, if these efforts were not successful, it was not for want of will. To convince Shankarrao Chavan, he was approached repeatedly.

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* See Appendix VI.

"That signing an undertaking was a part of this effort is known to all the prisoners in Yervada jail. The following pro-forma of the written undertaking signed by these 'freedom fighters' brings into sharp relief their cowardice;

PRO-FORMA OF UNDERTAKING

> Shri .... Detenu Class I .... prison agrees on affidavit that in case of my release I shall not do anything which is detrimental to internal security and public peace. Similarly, I shall not do anything which would hamper the distribution of essential goods. So also I shall not participate in any illegal activities. I shall not indulge in any activities which is prejudicial to the present emergency.

The Maharashtra government had demanded written undertaking for conditional release of the detenus. The RSS and Sangh detenus had independently decided to sign such undertakings. This caused a stir in the jail and socialist leaders like Bagaitkar, Babu Rao Samant and Dasrath Patil went to meet the Jana Sangh leader Mhalgi to dissuade his party people from signing this undertaking. *Mr. Mhalgi pleaded that the decision to sign the undertaking was taken by the top leaders of the RSS and Jana Sangh not confined to jail.* The pro-forma of this undertaking was agreed upon by those outsiders after conferring with the CM (the irony is that even among those who had signed the undertaking very few were released). By contrast freedom fighters like Shribhau Limaye and Dasrath Patil unequivocally refused to sign. Moreover, in their letter they rebuked the then CM that it was an insult to demand such an undertaking from freedom-fighters.

"The directive of the 'struggle committee' outside jails was that the RSS and Jana Sangh people should not sign such an undertaking. This was conveyed to them by S.M. Joshi. However, the directive was ignored. Ultimately, the letter of JP was sent in. At Nasik jail the socialists decided that this undertaking should not be given. There was division between the RSS and Jana Sangh on the one hand and the socialists on the other. A *senior leader of the RSS, Baba Bhide, used to address boudhik in which he always supported the emergency and emphasised that he had nothing to do with the anti-emergency struggle. Balasaheb Deoras himself said that 'had the government not banned the RSS, its volunteers would not have gone to jail in such large numbers by resorting to satyagraha'.*

"During this period there were several moves at Delhi level. It is quite likely that appeals were made to Indira Gandhi and Sanjay to intervene. Indeed, Deoras has admitted to have done so through Vinoba Bhave. Going a step further they convened a meeting in Kashmir in which they even decided to make a change in the organisation and *modus operandi of* the RSS. Instead of Sar Sangh Chalak (the chief), a President was to be elected and admission to non-Hindus was decided upon and conveyed to Sanjay Gandhi. In this connection a Jana Sangh leader of Delhi, Hans Raj Gupta, is mentioned. The information on what exactly transpired between the two is buried in silence.

"The reason for writing at such length about the RSS is that Deoras is masquerading that the RSS alone was the front-rank fighter in the anti-emergency struggle. The issue of undertaking was consigned to oblivion. To make their task easier, the government brought forward a 'memorandum'. This was no different from securing conditional release:

> Sir,
>
> Your case for detention has been reviewed by this government and it has been decided that the detention should be revoked subject to the condition that, you shall not participate in activities prejudicial to the present emergency and subject to good behaviour. You are requested to please note it.
>
> Yours faithfully,
> Sd/
> Section Officer Home Dept.
> Govt. of Maharashtra

"Many detenus opted for this recourse. Some of the RSS people took a legal stance and argued what was wrong in giving such an undertaking. Later, the ailing, the crippled, and the aged and those who have decided to withdraw from public life were allowed to opt for conditional release. Even this decision was taken independently of the RSS-Jana Sangh group. Even though it is unpleasant history it has to be made public for exposing the tall claims of the RSS."* So the clay feet of the RSS heroes could not remain behind the curtain!

The results of the 1977 election came for the RSS as a windfall--a gift of Indira-Sanjay politics. The threat having receded and the power well in hand, the RSS launched upon a new course to reach the goal of absolute power. An all-India tour of the chief was organised to create an impact of awe and wonder and he went about like a conquering Caesar. There couldn't be a better opportunity to make a public debut. I can't resist the temptation of quoting Baba Adhav again, so true is his description of the RSS antics in the days immediately following the victory of the Janata Party:

"Now that the emergency has been lifted, MISA detenus released, the Congress defeated--in short the 'threat' was over--the pronouncements of the RSS Chief started being published. On March 21, 1977 in the victory rally of the Janata Party the RSS chief was accorded welcome. Since then he has been touring every nook and corner of the country like the legendary Ashvamedha horse conquering the entire landscape. The description of these conquests is reaching the people through the Press, AIR, and TV.** In publicity he has surpassed even Sanjay Gandhi. The only difference is that at that time there was censorship. The chief has been accorded special welcome: *artis* by hundreds of married women, gun salutes, at some places he was garlanded, regal style, by elephants. And all this pomp and show were stage-managed to appear spontaneous.

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* Baba Adhav, *Secular Democracy,* Independence Number, (August 1977), pp. 40-41.

** L.K. Advani had become Minister for Information and Broadcasting by then.

"Wherever he goes, receptions are arranged; grand processions are organised; flags, festoons and special decorative arches are put on the route, followed by public receptions and press conferences. The colourful features of the programme have been published daily. Special supplements eulogising him have been published. Of late, erstwhile critics have started showering praise on him. With the RSS deriving moral strength from this, shakhas resumed functioning with characteristic zeal. From the chief down to the ordinary worker, everyone is speaking in a language of 'JITAM-MAYA' (I conquered). In the public meeting at Ramlila Grounds at Delhi the chief said: 'JP and RSS stood solidly in the struggle of Democracy versus Dictatorship'.*

And yet, the RSS was not free from fear. The RSS chief tried to clear his way to Indira Gandhi by declaring that no action should be taken against her and her son and that the government should act in a spirit of 'forget and forgive'. They also sought to develop a new political mask, the Jana Sangh having become worn out and thin. The word, therefore, went down that total merger of all the constituents of the Janata Party should be immediately brought about. The swayamsewaks, who had come to the Parliament made a big show of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice to persuade others to give up their inhibitions about the RSS. "We have burnt our boats and will not look back", Atal Behari used to declare with his characteristic flourish.

With the merger accomplished and the initial hurdles crossed they started another phase of operation. Playing one group leader against the other they tried to corner maximum benefits in terms of key appointments. At the centre they accepted less than their proportional share of ministerships but, by a process of shifting alliances, they secured dominant position in six of the eight states ruled by the Janata Party combination, with chief ministerships in three--Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh--plus the headship of the Delhi Metropolitan Council. Besides, they had their eye on the organisation. Nanaji had already planted himself rather strongly by refusing a ministership. The idea was to enrol a large number of members through RSS shakhas and capture the party through the seemingly legitimate democratic process.

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* Baba Adhav, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-40.

Neither the leadership nor the men of the RSS were, however, able to contain their joy and hold the heady wine of power. Talk of totally dominating national politics in ten years became frequent and open. A separate call for controlling the MPs and centrally directing the political moves was created with headquarters at the New Delhi residence of Sunder Singh Bhandari. Consisting of Bhandari, Nanaji, Advani, Vajpayee and J.P. Mathur, it began to function under direct supervision of Bhaurao Deoras, the younger brother of the RSS chief. Bhaurao who had been the chief organiser of the eastern zone with headquarters at Kanpur was shifted to New Delhi as a sort of political commissar.

The details of those tactical moves were not noticed by other partners but people like Krishan Kant and Madhu Limaye who had believed the assurances given by the Jana Sangh people on behalf of the RSS began to demand that they be honoured. Either the RSS should become a non-communal organisation and throw its membership open to all communities or the members of the RSS should be debarred from becoming members of the Janata Party. With the blessings of Jaya Prakash Narayan, Madhu Limaye started negotiations about the merger of thc RSS and, pending discussion on that, pressed for immediate merger of the youth and student organisations, trade union organisations and other mass organisations. The RSS, now secure in power and its isolation broken, took a somersault. Its High Command decided that the time had come to talk straight and put these people in their place. General Secretary Madhavrao Muley, accordingly administered a curt rebuff to JP in a letter saying: "Though swayamsewaks of RSS helped you in your movement against corruption in Bihar and were in the forefront of the struggle against dictatorship during the Emergency, Sangh has a distinct mission of its own from its very inception." He was much more harsh on Madhu Limaye whose reaction was: "I am surprised by the violent language used by Madhavrao Muley, General Secretary of the RSS."

At the same time the *Organiser* came out with an editorial which typified the new attitude:

> "Of late some gentlemen have floated the idea that the RSS should open its doors to non-Hindus, merge with some volunteer organisations to form a new organisation and thus provide the Janata Party with a volunteer organisation......
>
> "For one thing RSS in NOT a volunteer organisation. It is nobody's Boy Scout. It is a fifty years old movement, devoted to fostering character, instilling patriotism and rendering selfless service. It has thousands of veterans, before whom the gentlemen who want to 'reform' the RSS, would appear to be little more than volunteers themselves. Telling RSS how to run its organisation is like teaching Granny how to suck thumbs ......
>
> "As for admission of non-Hindus to RSS is concerned, the organisation is seized of the matter. But obviously it is not an easy problem with an easy solution. It will take its own time--and circumstances--to materialise ......
>
> "The 'reformers' want RSS to be open to non-Hindus and Jamaat-e-Islami to be open to non-Muslims. Next they would probably want Arya Samaj to be opened to Sanatanists and SGPC to non-Sikhs. It will be a cocktail of chalk and cheese. But the big question is: Are Muslims eager to join the RSS? And are Hindus eager to join the Jamaat-e-Islami?"

What this attitude did to Janata Party is recent history and will be discussed in more detail later in this book. But this process exposed both the ideology and practice of the RSS. The leadership again tried to go under the shelter of being a cultural organisation.

The key functionaries of the RSS, who were at one time advised to strictly remain away from the public eye and limelight of propaganda were instructed to go in for open and elaborate publicity to explain the position of the RSS. Was it a rehearsal to directly come into the arena of politics?

Chapter-VIII

Veil of Demagogy

It was the last week of February, 1978. The Chief Executive Councillor of Delhi, Kedar Nath Sahni, was signing a number of letters in Hindi--personal invitations to the citizens of the capital to attend the annual function of the Delhi branch of the RSS and improve their understanding about the Sangh. Sahni was a swaymsewak of long standing and had never wavered in his belief that those who criticise the Sangh are either motivated by malice or deficient in understanding.

It was a time of intense self-introspection in the ruling Janata Party. The party had been brought into being a year ago in the midst of anti-Congress euphoria that had swept the country a year earlier when all the opponents/victims of Emergency had come together under the blessings and guidance of the venerable Jai Prakash Narain and Acharya Kripalani. The political wing of the RSS, the Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS) had merged its identity into the new party. In the 1977 elections, held in the backdrop of widespread aversion against the Emergency, the new outfit had swept the polls, especially in north India and for the first time the Congress was replaced as a ruling party at the Centre and in almost the entire country north of the Vindhyas.

As the early enthusiasm abated and the organisational structure of the new party began to take shape tensions developed among various components, each trying to occupy maximum space in the emerging structure. Almost all the non-BJS sections of the party developed apprehensions that its RSS connection would give it undue advantage. The RSS had not merged its identity though its organisational network was backing the BJS endeavour to acquire a dominant position. As the ideological stance of the RSS was not compatible with the declared principles of the Janata Party it was feared that the RSS connection would affect the politics of the new party. The invitations to the RSS function were intended to persuade the critics to believe the RSS contention that it was not a political outfit. Those nurtured in the Sangh culture develop implicit faith in power of demagogy, that a lie well-packaged can be marketed as truth.

It was beyond Sahni's imagination that any one of the invitees may think of not availing the opportunity. But there were some such. Chaudhary Brahm Perkash*, for example, wrote back: "You have invited me to attend the annual day function of the Delhi RSS (in which the Sar Sangh chalak Balasaheb Deoras is participating) in an attempt to improve my knowledge of the RSS and to clear misunderstandings. Do you think a demonstration of discipline, parade and physical exercises combined with platitudinous preachings is enough to convince a person that RSS is an innocent organisation? I have a better view of human perception and understanding. The RSS presentation on such functions may be attractive for children and for those adults who have not known RSS. People like me who know cannot be taken in by such sham courtesy and discipline.

"I will concede right now", he added, "that RSS people are well disciplined. They are *also* trained in show of courtesy. Equally well trained are they in carrying on whisper campaigns for character assassination. The hands that rise for a polite *namaste are* equally well trained in planting the dagger in the side of those they disapprove. I have heard the RSS people frequently repeating the story of Shivaji killing Afzal Khan while courteously embracing the latter. It seems the RSS people have made this image of Shivaji as their model for political conduct rather than any other aspect of that valiant fighter's character."

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* A former Chief Minister of Delhi State, he became Minister of Food and Agriculture after the fall of the Morarji government.

This exchange of letters brings to mind another correspondence, that between Golwalkar and Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1948. The RSS then was under ban and the then RSS chief was making frantic efforts to personally meet the Prime Minister to convince him of the innocence of his organisation. Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter, personally signed, informed him with his characteristic politeness that it was no use and pointed out: "In the course of the last year both the central government and the provincial governments have received a mass of information in regard to the objectives and activities of the RSS. This information does not fit in with what has been stated by you in this behalf. Indeed *it would appear that the declared objectives have little to do with the real ones and with the activities carried on in various forms and ways by people associated with the RSS. These real objectives appear to be completely opposed to the decision of the Indian Parliament and the provisions of the proposed Constitution of India.* The activities, according to our information, are anti-national and often subversive and violent. You would appreciate, therefore, that mere assertions to the contrary do not help very much."

The problem of understanding (or misunderstanding) about the RSS was not new, nor of recent origin. It has already been discussed that the AICC treated RSS as a communal organisation way back in the 30's and how they tried unsuccessfully to get a certificate from Gandhi.

Gandhi was known to proclaim his opinion without any inhibition and if his doubts about the RSS had been set at rest he would have said so publicly. He also did not recommend to the Congress that restrictions on its members joining the RSS be withdrawn. The only opinion explicitly expressed is the one reported by Pyarelal: "A member of Gandhiji's party interjected that the RSS people had done a fine job of work at Wah refugee camp. They had shown discipline, courage and capacity for hard work. 'But don't forget', answered Gandhiji, 'even so had Hitler's Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini.' He characterised the RSS as a 'communal body with a totalitarian outlook'."*

The RSS people may say, perhaps with some justification, that it is Pyarelal's report against their own, and, therefore, cannot be taken as a conclusive proof of Gandhi's opinion. Even if the plea be conceded and the RSS be given the benefit of doubt on this score, it does not prove that their own contention about Gandhi's views on the RSS is correct or justified. That the RSS has been hostile to Gandhi is so widely known and believed that no amount of assertion to the contrary can carry conviction; and of that there is sufficient proof in their own writings and speeches. Even Sardar Patel, whom they considered an ally and who did have a soft corner for them, had finally come to the conclusion that the poison which killed Gandhi had been generated by the RSS (see Chapter-XI).

The credibility of the RSS is further reduced by the habit of its publicists to flaunt stray favourable remarks of public men as commendation of the RSS even though they be known to hold widely divergent opinions from it on basic national issues like the interpretation of history, concept of nationalism, relationship of ends and means. It has been the experience of several eminent figures that the RSS praised them to the skies as long as they served its purpose but the moment they differed the RSS resorted to vilification of the worst kind. Charan Singh had had such experiences ever since in 1967 when he had embarked on the course of politics which forced on him alliance with Jana Sangh. They would be soft like wax before the compact was made but hard like stone immediately thereafter.

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* Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi - The Last Phase,* p. 440.

Jaya Prakash Narayan has been the worst victim of these tactics. He praised them for hard work and efficiency in 1966 but by early 1968 he came to the conclusion that it was a communal organisation of fascist variety. In his presidential address at the Second National Conference against Communalism held in New Delhi he declared:

> "The secular protestations of the Jana Sangh will never be taken seriously unless it cuts the bonds that tie it firmly to the RSS machine. Nor can the RSS be treated as a cultural organisation as long as it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party."*

During the Bihar Movement, partly because of the earnest pleadings of Nanaji and partly because of the dire need of a cadre organisation, JP laid aside his old objections as also the apprehensions of some of his close friends and extended his patronage to the RSS. He was reassured that the Sangh was undergoing a process of fierce rethinking and he should help it to change and become useful for the nation. Thus securing hold of the heart-strings of the Messiah of Total Revolution the RSS extended its octopus grip over the movement and, in the bargain, emerged as the most influential faction in the new political grouping i.e., the Janata Party. Having gained a foothold in the heart of the power structure they turned round to tell JP off.

'Hands off RSS' declared Madhorao Muley, the then Sar Karyavah (General Secretary) of the RSS. The old man must have felt deeply cut up by the change if it had been fully reported to him. However he continued to make efforts, rather pathetic they looked, to convince the Sangh to change. He tried to win them over by love; he did not withdraw his patronage and affection and continued to associate himself with the functions of the Sangh but with due reservations, Addressing an RSS rally in Patna he repeated his entreaty:

> "I have said it before and I say it again today that it appears to me that *there is need for basic change in the*

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* See *Secular Democracy,* Annual Number, 1969, for full text.

> *role of the Sangh and may be there is even need for a modification in its basic aims and objectives. Though it is not a reality even then people identify it with Hindu communal and caste interests.* But I know that a lot of discussion is going on between your organisers and the cadres about associating the followers of other religions, especially of those religions which are not born in India, such as Islam and Christianity, but are Indians in the same way as Hindus are."*

It seems the affectionate entreaties and sincere advice of JP produced no effect on Deoras and his men. They went ahead with their plans causing anxiety and alarm all around. A letter which JP wrote to Prime Minister Morarji on March 2, 1979 contained the following lines:

> "Some friends have repeatedly complained that RSS is trying to capture leadership in the government. The RSS, like other political parties, is free to influence politics and is doing that too. My only objection is that the RSS people are trying to influence politics with the camouflage of being a cultural organisation. I have advised the leaders of the RSS to merge with other like-minded organisations or the Sangh should get affiliated to Janata Party. They, however, refuse to accept my views in the belief that they have a separate cultural identity and they have nothing to do with politics. I totally disagree with this argument of the .RSS leaders. Even now I feel that the RSS should merge into organisations supporting Janata Party. But if they are determined to retaining their separate identity I would again say that they should open their doors to non-Hindus like Muslims and Christians.
>
> "I have always condemned the Hindu Rashtravad of RSS because it is a dangerous ideology and is contradictory

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* Speech made in April 1977 but published in *Organiser,* April 8, 1979. The belated publication was compelled by the discussions in the Janata Party on the question of its members RSS connection.

> to our ideal of composite Indian nation. In a democracy every organisation has a right to propagate its philosophy and ideology. That is the essence of democracy. And yet when it intends to establish its hold on politics we have to be watchful that its philosophy or ideology does not undermine the basic philosophy of Indian nationalism.
>
> "I have no objection to the RSS being affiliated to the Janata Party but it will have to change its Hindu face and become fully secular. If it does not do that it should withdraw from politics and sever all connections with every constituent of Janata Party.
>
> "Nevertheless as Prime Minister of India it is your duty to make an effort to reform RSS or to make it a secular force. All the thinking persons should combat its efforts to disrupt the secular basis of Indian nation and state."*

JP was persuaded to remove this portion from the epistle by his friends and advisers on the understanding that another letter on the subject could be sent later. Who did the persuading and why, is not known. It is no use guessing either because the fact of JP thinking along these lines is already public knowledge. The RSS must have been a part of his total frustration in the last days of his life.

All the old apprehensions about the RSS had come alive after watching its antics and operations in government and the party. After the downfall of Indira Gandhi, while the rest of the Janata Party people were trying to address themselves to the problems facing the nation, the RSS chief went round the country to reap the rich harvest of people's affection for those who had liberated them from the deadly stranglehold of the emergency caucus. Impressive public receptions were held for him in all the important towns of the country and Deoras made clever use of these occasions to project a bright image of the RSS** what with railing against the opponents of the Sangh, demagogic presentation of its communal ideology as if it were genuine nationalism, and effective camouflage being provided by the Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and cringing opportunism of some Muslims for whom the plums of office had come like unexpected berries on a windy day. It was downright cheekiness but was tolerated in the euphoric flush after the 1977 historic victory,

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* Weekly *Dinaman* (Hindi), April 8-14, 1979.

** At the reception in Delhi's Ramlila grounds Deoras said: "JP and RSS stood solidly in the struggle of Democracy versus Dictatorship."

Soon enough however the other partners in the struggle were constrained to spill the beans and expose the tall claims. Madhu Limaye's was a typical reaction. Writing in the *Secular Democracy* he not only contested Deoras's claim but also exposed that the Sangh was going out of its way to propitiate and please Indira Gandhi and her son. He wrote: "The RSS people claim that they spearheaded the anti-emergency struggle. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The ban on the RSS frightened them. The morale of their detenus collapsed within a few days after the declaration of the emergency. A vast majority of these detenus abjectly apologised to the authorities. Many deserted the RSS and the Jana Sangh in order to escape arrest. This was their concept of 'character building'. In flaming contrast was the behaviour of those who participated in the struggles under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi."

According to him the RSS, in fact, had not only surrendered but capitulated: "What is most surprising is that the RSS chief went so far as to congratulate Mrs. Gandhi on her success in the election appeal before the Supreme Court. As everybody knows this victory was obtained by changing the law and the Constitution in her favour. During the emergency the RSS men sent repeated peace-feelers to Mrs. Gandhi. They requested JP again and again to withdraw the movement."

He has also revealed how they had hailed the emergence of Sanjay Gandhi: "When Shri Sanjay Gandhi published his interview against the public sector and in favour of free market capitalism they started hailing him as a great leader. In the emergency period, unlike *Sadhana, Opinion, Bhoomiputra* and other journals, the RSS newspapers and periodicals surrendered before the government and began to sing praises for Mrs. Gandhi. During the emergency days the RSS had often declared that they had nothing to do with the JP movement. They even criticised in their affidavits JP's appeal to the police and armed forces to disregard illegal government orders. They did everything in their power to curry favour with the government."*

The fears were confirmed not only by the display of braggadocio but by the way the RSS men were trying to secure a grip over key positions in the power structure. With the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in hand L.K. Advani achieved results for the Sangh which Indira Gandhi had failed to achieve with all the elaborate paraphernalia of coercion and censorship. So subtly did Advani acculturise the media that the 'publicity shy' RSS men suddenly became newsworthy for reporters and the press barons awoke to the till-then-unknown talents of Sangh men. In some of the reputed 'national dailies' these men replaced the old experienced journalists; many an editor, devoted to professionalism, found himself at wits' end against the invasion of new commitment. The AIR, TV and PIB went through exercises to ensure the exclusion of RSS critics from the various programmes and encouragement to those capable of seeing virtue in the outfit. Rules for extending facilities to journalists were carefully modified to make freedom of press and opinion 'genuine'.

With Vajpayee presiding over the Ministry of External Affairs polite suggestions for taking the Sangh men on foreign trips began to be made and xenophobic swayamsewaks developed a new taste for things beyond Indian shores. The Friends of India Society International held a huge conference in New Delhi under the presidentship of Hans Raj Gupta, the venerable Sangh chalak for North India, and received the benign blessings of Balasaheb Deoras. It was taken as a signal by Indian missions all over the world to take note of the winds of change in New Delhi and adjust to the men of 'genuine nonalignment'. A journalist from the headquarters of the RSS who had been associated with the RSS expansion outside the country was brought to hold a key position in one of the important institutions controlled by the External Affairs Ministry.

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* Madhu Limaye, *Secular Democracy,* March (II) 1979.

An attempt was made to plant an approved 'expert' in the Ministry of Industrial Development which had been allotted to Brijlal Verma, Nanaji's favourite from Madhya Pradesh. But it misfired. However in the various Janata ruled states, the Sangh men were placed in charge of the most lucrative portfolios. There had been so much noise against corruption in the preceding few years that ordinary men with ordinary appetites would have gone unnoticed but the Sangh men made their mark and won reputation for skilful and large-scale use of office to corner money--of course, for promoting the best interests of the nation through the most patriotic agency of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. Whether you had to set up an industry, secure some license, get job or try for a transfer you had to go through a most efficiently organised agency of public recommendation. Teachers in schools, doctors in dispensaries, policemen in police stations--all began to devise ways of propitiating the new gods.

The Vidyarathi Parishad was let loose in temples of learning--colleges, universities and institutes of research. Teachers and scholars suspected of being anti-RSS were sought to be pushed out by the worst kind of hoodlum tactics, and the efforts did meet with success in several cases. The soft-spoken scion of the Bengali bhadralok, P.C. Chunder, the then Education Minister, found it politic to enthusiastically respond to the suggestions from these self styled guardians of Indian culture.

The first assault, as was natural, was against the institutions dealing with history. On the basis of a mere anonymous letter some text-books, hailed earlier all over the country as model aids to instruction in history, were withdrawn; Indian Council of Historical Research was drastically re-organised and a rival to Indian History Congress was promoted in collaboration with the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Research Foundation, a trust set-up by Nanaji Deshmukh. A whole crop of societies and institutions mushroomed all over the country to make use of the fabulous funds meant for adult education to promote the 'national cause'.

All this should have been enough to put the most lackadaisical feudal politicians on guard. Those who stood up to call a halt do not deserve much credit: in fact they had compromised their principles and personalities for too long and deserved the twitting-'Didn't you know?', 'Were you babes'-they got from the Sangh men.

The RSS journals and newspapers had made their own contribution by arrogant abuse of whoever dared cross the path of the Sangh--whether it was Charan Singh, George Fernandes, H.N. Bahuguna, Madhu Limaye, Krishan Kant or E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

On top of all was the chief Deoras who was scattering gems of his 'cultural wisdom' all over the country. Late in 1978 he displayed the muscle in the field of education by inaugurating an all-India conference of RSS run schools where thousands of young students and teachers were brought together to launch the apex organisation, Shiksha Bharati.* Early next year, coinciding with the Republic Day in 1979, the RSS organised a World Hindu Conference at Prayag where Deoras gave notice that conversions to non-Hindu religions would not be tolerated any more.** He exhorted the Government of India to look after the interests of the Hindus abroad. Not Indians, mind you! It left everybody wondering whether it did not constitute an invidious distinction between Indian citizens on the basis of religion and whether it would not create difficulties for Hindus living in other countries. From there he went to the sensitive eastern region and made speeches which were followed by unrest among tribals, particularly those belonging to the Christian faith. In Gauhati he made the astounding statement that the Hindus coming over from Bangladesh should be treated by the government as refugees while the Muslims should be thrown out as infiltrators.

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* Reported in the *Organiser,* November 12, 1978.

** Reported in the *Organiser,* February 4, 1979. That was the call for the VHP activities in Meenakshipuram and the violence seen in 1998-99 in Gujarat, Bihar, Orissa and Arunachal Pradesh against Christians on the question of conversion.

It was a call for a communal twist to the government policy on the unfortunate immigrants according to which all people coming to India in the wake of 1971 developments were to be sent back but only after ascertaining from Dacca which of them were genuine Bangladeshis. (All this has been repeated on a larger scale by the Sangh Pariwar during the decade of 90's).

And yet. the RSS would have us believe that it is a purely cultural organisation having no interest in politics, that its outlook is not communal but national, that it has generated more honesty and patriotism than any other agency. It is not they who need to change, we are told, but their critics who should improve their minds and reform their outlook. Nay, they would suspect that those who criticise them are inspired by motives not altogether honourable. Speaking at the function to which Sahni was inviting people with such earnestness, Deoras, the Sar Sangh chalak, said, "As some changes are taking place in the political situation these days, political pressure is being mounted on us to change the original base of the Sangh. But it does not behove us to disown our basis, whatever the pressure. Therefore, our mission of Hindu Sangathan or unity should be understood clearly."

Are we to believe that the demand for change in outlook was being made on them only in the year of grace 1979? Did everybody from Gandhi downwards understand, appreciate and approve their 'mission of Hindu Sangathan'? If that is not the case, as it is not, to talk of political pressure is not entirely honest. It only means that all those who have been fondly hoping that they would learn from life and change are in for disappointment.

There could be hope if an attempt had been made to rationally examine and explain the concepts which we are required to understand. But Deoras starts by asserting "For thousands of years in all the states and the languages of this country, terms like Hindu, Hindu society, Hindu dharma, Hindu culture, Hindu tradition and Hindu civilisation have been widely used. This shows that Hindus and Hindu society are very much there." But who ever disputed it? Nor has it ever been controverted that there have been 'a number of great men who have worked for social reform' and for the removal of social evils like untouchability, caste system, dowry and child marriage from the Hindu society. He tried to prove his argument, if there is any, by pointing out that the reformers did not try similar reform in the Muslim society.

The RSS is not called communal because it has done anything to remove the social evils or undesirable 'customs and practices' which weaken the social fabric and render people incapable of contributing to social good. Rather the complaint against it is that it seeks to win support of the Hindus by only mentioning some names like Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar and in practice repudiates them all. The RSS is not known to have ever studied society, nor has it ever conducted any campaign for social reform. And how does he put reform and consolidation at par? Vivekananda had said: "I see around me men quarrelling in the name of religion. Hindus, Muslims, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishnavaites, Saivites, all are engaged in these fights. They never pause to think that Lord Krishna is the same as Siva, that Brahman, Jesus and Allah are the same, that the same Rama has a thousand names." He had declared that "all religions are branches of the same tree".* Such ideas occur frequently in the social and philosophical discourses of all great men. What do the RSS people do? After repeating the mantra 'एकम् सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति' they turn round to repudiate its very spirit by saying that change of religion subverts the loyalty to nation. The Hindu tradition has never expected, or forced, conformity even in the name of god, what to speak of citizenship as does the RSS.

It should be kept in mind that the charge of communalism is not against Hindu society as RSS and its associates try to show. The charge is against the RSS and its ideology which run against the very spirit of Hinduism in excluding the followers of religions born outside India from the concept of nation and rights of citizenship. That is what Gandhi objected to, and more recently Jaya Prakash. The attempt at false identification, at creating an illusion that the RSS and the Hindu society are synonymous, in fact makes the sincerity of the Sangh suspect. It is sheer demagogy reminiscent of the Nazi practice and its main practitioner Goebbles.

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* Quoted by K. Damodaran, *Indian Thought*, p. 35.

Chapter-IX

Political Acrobatics

The set of values and scale of loyalties which form the basic ingredients of the RSS culture make the Sangh men different from others and render them incapable of coexisting with other members of society in a decent and civilised manner. That gives rise to tensions and complications in the political field necessitating declarations, from time to time, that the RSS is a cultural, and not a political organisation.

We have already shown (Chapter-I) that this assertion is wholly untenable because facts show that the Sangh is nothing if not political. The culture which is fostered through the shakha drill is political, not only in essence, but in its entirety. If the political content be taken out, nothing would be left behind. Even the denial of its political character is deeply political. Take for instance a resolution passed by its Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) at its meeting held on March 24-26, 1979. It reads:

> "The ABPS is amused at the campaign of calumny launched recently against the RSS by power-seekers who have decided to use RSS as a scape-goat in the game of their factional in-fighting and by a section of the Press committed to these elements.

> "The RSS has made it amply clear that it is a social and cultural organisation and that it is not at all interested in power politics. Further, the generation or growth of any nationalist patriotic force in Bharat is not likely to be welcomed by super powers interested in extending their spheres of influence in this part of the globe. The news item released by TASS on February 8 is one of the indicators of this fact. We, however, feel confident that the ever-alert people of this country will not be misled by such politically motivated propaganda. The ABPS exhorts all sections of the population to continue to extend their sincere support to the nation-building activities of the RSS, and frustrate the designs of such super powers and their local stooges."*

The resolution, in reaction to a news item issued by the Soviet news agency Tass, is an attempt to obscure the truth by adopting an air of injured innocence and imputing unworthy motives to its critics. The Sangh is no longer in a position to deny that it is deeply interested and involved in politics, particularly after the deposition in the Nagpur Court already referred to. Para 14 of the deposition reads:

> "It is common knowledge that policy is not a permanent feature and changes or is changed from time to time. *It is evident that this clause was included in the constitution so as to protect the organisation from the misconcieved allegations and charges. This is why faith in evolution and peaceful and legtimate means is expressed.* So also tolerance towards all faiths. So far as politics is concerned it is made clear that it does not indulge in politics, i.e. day to day politics, though Sangh has a political philosophy within its wide sweep of cultural work. It is possible for Sangh to change this policy and even participate in politics."**

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* Published in the *Organiser,* April 8,1979.

** See *Secular Democracy,* April (1), 1979.

In para 19 it is said: "The constitution and rules are liable to be changed, modified etc. including its aims, objects, policy and as such it is not of such a nature which alone could not be looked into to determine the purpose of the activity. *Tomorrow the policy could be changed and the RSS could participate in even day to day political activity as a political party because policy is not a permanent or irrevocable thing.*"

The issue is clinched in para 27: "Now if this is the Sanskritic work which the RSS founder postulated to carry out in the country through the medium of RSS read with the 'Pratidyna' incorporated in the Constitution and the Prarthana daily recited, it must be held that the RSS activity is akin to a work for a political purpose, though the RSS as an organisation eschews participation in active politics of power as of policy. Nevertheless its members may and do take part in politics subject to the present policy limitations of the Constitution. It is undisputed that several members of the RSS are actively participating in political activity and many of them are even members of Parliament and several of them are in the Union and state Cabinets."

In the light of the above, the ABPS resolution becomes a rather unsuccessful attempt to find alibis and to cultivate popular sympathy by invoking fear of foreign powers interested in denigrating the RSS. That incidentally reminds one that interest of foreign powers in the RSS has not always been negative. Powerful interests and lobbies in the USA have looked upon it as an ally and a friend. We have already referred to the interest of the CIA as reflected in Curran's monogram. And there are more straws in the wind. On the eve of the 1967 general election there was a full-page write up on the Jana Sangh in the *New York Times*. It showered high praise on Golwalkar and his organisation. Would it all be interpreted as an American or CIA or Israeli attempt* to interfere in India's internal affairs by giving a boost to the RSS? Similarly on the eve of the 1971 election a full-page advertisement appeared in the same paper appealing for funds to defend democracy in India.* Many of those in whose name the appeal was issued also figured later in the Friends of India Society International, an RSS front organisation set up during Janata Party rule when ministry of External Affairs was presided over by Vajpayee.

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* *The New York Times* is known to be a part of the Zionist lobby in the USA.

The position of the Sangh would be better appreciated if they took the position that they had a politics which is liked by the USA and not liked by the USSR. They are not alone in this respect. There are others also whose politics is liked by one set of foreigners and not by another. Why bring in the emotive epithets like nationalist and patriotic? We have earlier also remarked that too much exhibition of the badge of patriotism makes its bona fides suspect. And with the RSS that has been the habit from the very inception.

By adopting tactics which befuddle the issues the RSS makes its aims and intentions look even more suspect. Let us take another example. In the same issue of the *Organiser* which carries the resolution of the Pratinidhi Sabha there is an article by K.R.M. (initials of the then chief editor and BJP member of the last Rajya Sabha, K.R. Malkani) in which he has sought to clarify the position of the RSS vis-a-vis politics. He wrote:

> "I guess there is a gross misunderstanding about RSS goals. Politicians view everything through their political glasses; they can't believe that anybody should want anything but power. In 1950, the Congress Working Committee even invited the RSS workers to join the Congress under the impression that RSS would like to share power. But the swayamsewaks showed no interest in the offer."**

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* This was long before the change of authoritarianism was levelled against Indira Gandhi. The Jana Sangh at that time was opposing bank nationalisation and abolition of privy purses (of the ex-rulers of princely states).

** Malkani's claim about 'swayamsewaks showing no interest' is attempt at misinformation. The CWC had passed a resolution but also put the condition that the Sangh merge into Congress. Within a few days the resolution was rescinded when the Committee members were made aware of its character by Nahru.

> "Fact is that RSS is not political. It is, if I may coin a word, meta-political. It is not interested in power as such; but it is very much interested in the factors and forces that go into the making of a country's politics. It is interested in the people and their character, in our culture and its integrity; in the country and its unity and strength. But *it stands above and beyond politics, like some kind of an institutional Rajguru.* Were it interested in power, there was nothing to prevent its entry into politics as early as 1945 or even earlier. Its influence with masses and in the administration right upto the highest rungs--there was an ICS shakha in New Delhi in 1947--could have been easily transformed into a formidable political force. But it chose otherwise. It looked beyond current politics to the future of India. It is time everybody accepted established facts and stopped fabricating unfacts."*

If that be the position, Malkani or any other spokesman of the RSS should have no quarrel with Madhu Limaye who says: "The RSS line is very clear. It is a supra-party, para-military organisation which wants to take over the state and the nation and establish an authoritarian regime in the manner of the Nazi leaders."**

The desire to act as the Rajguru is inborn in the Sangh as can be judged from the attempt at imitating the Ramdas cult. Unfortunately for the RSS times in which it is operating are vastly different. While the former operated in a feudal milieu and expressed a democratic tendency to arouse the common man to bring about a political change, the latter are constrained to act in a situation where people are already on the move. In the time of Shivaji perhaps appeal to religious sentiments could be the only valid motive force against the Moghuls because the system of governance was the same in both cases, feudal, autocratic. People in those times, were apathetic to change of rulers because it hardly ever brought about any change or improvement in their lives. They were moved by a sense of loyalty which could be buttressed by invoking the sanction of some supra-natural or divine authority. In modern times people are moved by more secular considerations and whoever seeks to hold the affection of the masses over a long period has to come out with a viable programme of social transformation which may assure the downtrodden that their interests would get precedence over the interests of the top dogs, the affluent class and the class of those who have been dominating others just because they happened to be born in a so-called high caste family.

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* *Organiser,* April 8, 1979.

** Madhu Limaye, "The Ambitions of the RSS", *Sunday,* June 10, 1979.

The RSS, as we have noticed, has been born and bred as a protector of the status quo with slight modification to find a place in the sun for the lower middle class--the petty traders and the job-doers. The section whose interests it sought to promote are not known for waging an open struggle. They like to hang on to the coat-tails of those who wield power, prestige and wealth by virtue of their inheritance and ability to exploit. Its alliance, therefore, could not but be with the upper classes who also treated it as no more than a pressure mechanism, a kind of shoo-dog to frighten the army of hungry wolves intent on devouring their privileges, a brake on the popular movement and a diversion on the growing consciousness of class differences and clash of class interests. One of the manouvres to keep democratic politics stuck in emotional issues of religion, race or caste rather than projecting issues of equality, equity and justice. It could never, therefore, develop the courage and confidence to project a socio-economic programme which could lend legitimacy to its politics. In the case of an openly status quo party it is not easy. In the very nature of things the RSS could act only surreptitiously.

If it has been able to develop some political following it is more because it comes clad in the respectable cloak of religion, talking in terms of devotion and renunciation, *tyag* and *tapasya*. And it makes headway only when the main flank of the national movement tends to lose or loses its moorings whether it was in the short period of transition in 1947 or in the confused situation following the Chinese invasion and the death of Nehru. Later, when Indira Gandhi made a somersault and projected her Sanjay face and subseqnuently in the negative politics of anti-Congressism. In other words the RSS makes headway only in conditions of instability and confusion, when the goal is not clear and masses feel frustrated.

Its politics, therefore, has been to keep its face hidden while the nation is marching ahead and to make an appearance when there are signs of fatigue and ennui. The secrecy about its aims has been its major asset. Balraj Madhok is the classic example of a man being discarded only because he made subrosa operation difficult. He insisted on an open assertion of the rightist character of the Sangh and relegating the RSS to the position of a cadre-training institution. The note which Madhok submitted at the Kanpur session of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh for the consideration of the Working Committee is significant in this context. It says "To say that 'if rightism means status-quoism, the Jana Sangh is a leftist party' is to betray mental confusion. Right and Left are two distinct and well-defined concepts. Class struggle and state control of all means of production and distribution are essential features of leftist socialist ideology. Jana Sangh has always rejected both these concepts. They are neither in keeping with 'Bharatiya Sanskriti and Maryada' nor are they conducive to economic well-being of the people together with freedom".

On the problems of organisation he made suggestions which could put an end to the influence of the RSS *pracharaks* in the BJS. He had recommended in para 7 of the note: "The institution of Sangathan Mantries (organisation secretaries) should be abolished. This is essential to develop a sense of responsibility in elected presidents and secretaries of the party and create local leadership at all levels. Whole-time workers may be appointed at different levels to extend the organisational work. But such workers should be paid by and be answerable to the respective unit of the party." Later on in the same note he pointed out, "It is wrong to think that only a person who has passed through a particular mill can become the leader."

The organising secretaries in the BJS were really *pracharaks*. of the RSS, paid and sustained by the RSS. (The same position continues in BJP). They tended to be answerable only to the parent body and not the democratic forums of which they were members. Madhok also doubted their ability for mass work. He had thus become inconvenient and had refused to be squeezed out. Therefore he was thrown out. His position had been earlier described by Baburao Patel of *Mother India* in his characteristic style: ' Because he did not put the short khaki trousers under the black cap and a white shirt and carry harmless bamboo stick to salute Guruji M. S. Golwalkar of the RSS, Madhok was soon replaced by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. who touches Guruji Golwalkar's feet without even having an attack of dyspepsia."

The opportunity that Indira Gandhi provided by her inept handling of the situation after the Bangladesh war and more particularly during the emergency brought the RSS fingers on the steering wheel of power. It was a testing time for it but it failed to contain itself and showed its hand. Bahuguna, Minister for Petroleum in the Janata Party government, spilt the beans in a long interview to the *Sunday* in which he gave details of the RSS operations. He pointed out that as long as the RSS was in the government the communal riots could not be stopped because that gave respectability to communalism and demoralised administration.

On the relationship of the Janata Party with the RSS he said:

> "It is the relationship of wood and fire. In 1977, the camel put its head in the tent, and all through the last two years the camel has been trying to take over the tent. What is the Jana Sangh? The Jana Sangh was the front organisation of the RSS. This front organisation was merged with the Janata, but the loyalty of the cadre was

> not merged--their loyalty remained with the RSS. Plus the other RSS front organisations remained in existence. The Vidyarathi Parished remained, the Yuva Janata Morcha was formed, as if the Vidyarathi Parishad was not enough. Then the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh was activated and received open patronage from the Jana Sanghis in power. See what happened during the water crisis in Delhi. It is true that one of the reasons why a person like Chandrashekharji was chosen by consensus as the Janata President was in order to prevent the domination of the party by any particular wing. But the Jana Sangh kept increasing its influence.
>
> "Take the question of membership. Any independent observer will tell you that RSS volunteers took charge of enrolment of members: At least about UP I know and this certainly happened in UP. I can prove it. In every village this happened. Everywhere the Jana Sangh kept running parallel offices, holding parallel meetings. Wherever the Jana Sangh leaders went, they only kept in touch with other Jana Sanghis. Through the RSS, a parallel programme was in operation."

Bahuguna's comment on the way they tried to tackle the leaders is interesting:

> "The Jana Sangh has operated very cleverly. They deployed some people on Morarjibhai, whom Morarjibhai began to trust. Some concentrated on Babuji, some on Chandrashekhar, some on Charan Singh. Yes, Jana Sanghis came to me too, but Jana Sangh *laga-lekin chipka nahin* (it did not stick). The Jana Sangh had its people in every camp. In some places, the friendship could not survive the first strains when they came--for example, the friendship with Chaudhury Sahib.
>
> "They told Babuji that they had wanted to make him Prime Minister but unfortunately were not able to because of JP's and Acharya Kripalani's choice of Morarjibhai. So

> Babuji felt that they were sympathetic to him. Morarjibhai was convinced that he had this strong and organised force of the Jana Sangh behind him and this combined with the Congress (O) made him invincible."

All these disclosures are damaging enough., but the worst that has happened from the Sangh viewpoint is that the situation has dragged them out of secure privacy. Till then they were fighting from behind the hills of obscurity now they had to operate in open plains. The RSS chief tried to take on the old cover and make people believe that whatever was said against the Sangh was 'motivated' by blind hatred.

People are bound to ask: Bahuguna, Madhu Limaye, Raj Narain and others of that category are perhaps 'politically motivated' or are 'habitual Sangh-baitors'. But what about Atal Bihari Vajpayee? He was not under the influence of any anti-Sangh foreign power. Nor was he interested in the break up of the Janata Party. And he unhesitatingly proclaimed his unbreakble association with the RSS from the very childhood. Why did he feel constrained to say that "RSS claiming to be a social and cultural organisation, should have taken greater pains to demonstrate that they did not seek a political role". He has specifically pointed out the hypocrisy of the claim: "Patronising a press that takes sides in the sordid politics of power, involvement in youth bodies that interest with political parties, Participating in trade union rivalries such as the one which recently brought enormous misery to the people of Delhi by callously cutting off the water supply--these do not help an organisation to establish its political credentials."

He has voiced the doubts of people even on its communal character:

> "It is possible that some people genuinely feel apprehensive about the RSS. A certain onus accordingly devolved on the RSS, an onus that has not been discharged effectively by the RSS. Its repudiation of the theocratic form of the state was welcome, yet the question could

> legitimately be asked--why does it not open its doors to non-Hindus? Recent statements of the RSS chief, Mr. Deoras, indicate that non-Hindus are being encouraged to join the organisation. A natural corollary of this process would be clear enunciation by the RSS that by 'Hindu Rashtra' it means the Indian nation which includes non-Hindus as equal members."*

On account of these manifest doubts there was a lot of wrangling about the members of the RSS becoming members of the Janata Party. Such questions had never arisen in the Jana Sangh because soon after its birth it had been totally converted into a political wing of the RSS. In the Janata Party there was a preponderance of non-Janata elements who wanted to save it from becoming another Jana Sangh. Therefore the question of dual membership came up as soon as the formation of the party was declared. It must be said to the credit of the RSS men that they made their position clear from the beginning although, with clever tactics, they did not let the hope die that they might realise the incongruity of the position and come round to severing the RSS connection. The matters were brought to a head when there grew a strong feeling that they were only buying time till they capture the levers of power in the government and organisation. The ten year time of which Deoras talked in Bhopal (see Chapter-VII) was the period they had set for the culturisation of the Janata Party so that it could willingly submit itself to the RSS.

The apprehension about the loyalty of the Sangh men is quite natural. Besides the facts that came to light the culture they imbibe in the RSS itself makes them suspect. Unlike others who uphold humanist and democratic values they refuse to recognise the coexistence of a multiplicity of loyalties. Otherwise why should they interpret change of religion as change of loyaltyto the nation? When such people refuse to give total loyalty to a political party those whose political culture is different are bound to feel insecure. They had before them, whenever they cared to remember, the examples of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Ram Rajya Parishad etc., which had lost their identities as a result of cooperaion with the RSS (in the garb of Jana Sangh).

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* *Indian Express*, August 2, 1979.

A plea is taken on behalf of the RSS that it is not a political party in the sense that it is not interested in power politics. It has also been asserted that its concept of Hindu Rashtra is the same as Bharatiya Rashtra and therefore does not in any way conflict with the Janata Party's faith in secularism. So far as the second plea is concerned we will come to it later and see how divergent it is from the concept of nationalism (see Chapter-XII) on which our Constitution is based and which forms the basic thinking of all non-RSS India. However it would be proper to deal with the relationship of the RSS with politics and, in that light, examine its claim of being disinterested in power. The RSS, let it be understood, makes a significant distinction between the State and the Nation, the *raj* and the *rashtra.* It refuses to take cognisance of the human advance to democracy which implies obliteration of this distinction. When the State represents the totality of national life, the sovereignty of the people, the Nation cannot exist apart from it unless, *of* course, the sovereignty is lost and the Nation is subjugated by an imperialist or colonial power; the vice versa also is true. For the RSS it is not so. They consider Statehood only a function of the Nation, something like the government which wields power and authority to keep law and order. In other words they think only in terms of a police state and do not wish it to meddle with the economic, social, educational and cultural life. (except when it is done to comply with the demands of the RSS as the HRD Minister Murli Manohar Joshi did in regard to the education policy and administration).

As such politics, which is just a means of securing power to rule over society and manage law and order, would be only one of the several spheres of activity which the cultural work of the RSS encompasses. Therefore the RSS would act the supra-party, the extra constitutional authority or the *rajguru,* as Malkani preferred to describe it; it would like to influence the State power and politics through its other activities but would not like to subject its operations to democratic discipline by agreeing to the proposition that in a democracy the whole sphere of human activity is the concern of the State and therefore of politics. The RSS is not a state within a state; it seeks to be a sovereign authority above the State. 'I am the States said Hitler; 'I am the State and much more than that, its spiritual mentor-a supra-natural authority." says the RSS.

This being the situation the RSS man owing loyalty to what he considers a 'superior sovereignty' would not agree to get subsumed into what, in his opinion, is a narrow institution like a political party. When he says that he would abide by the discipline of the political party he says it in the belief that the work of the RSS outside would so transform the situation that the party as a whole would accept the discipline of the RSS. It happened with the Jana Sangh and the phenomenon can be repeated with any other political formation. It is for the others to decide whether men of such culture can be accepted as safe partners.

Chapter-X

Testing Time

Sar Sangh Chalak Balasaheb Deoras made an extraordinary statement on March 4, 1994 in the meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha of the RSS:

> "Today, I appoint Professor Rajendra Singh whom we affectionately call Rajju Bhaiya as the Sarsanghchalak of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. Actually I have nominated Prof. Rajendra Singhji to this post three years ago after consultations with my senior colleagues in the Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal (of the RSS)".

It was an unusual statement in many ways. First, the nomination was being publicly announced by the incumbent chief during his lifetime and the successor was not only nominated but actually installed. There was no precedent for it. Earlier the name of the successor, on both occasions, was made known only after the demise of the chief. Secondly, on the two earlier occasions it was the Sar Karyavah (General Secretary) who succeeded to the post and Rajju Bhaiya was only Sah Sar Karyavah (Joint General Secretary). Thirdly, unlike his two predecessors, he was a north Indian belonging to U.P. and not a Maharashtrian. Fourthly, he was a non-Brahmin. Fifthly he was, like his predecessor, suffering from diabetes because of which he had found himself unfit to carry on the responsibility as Sar Karyavah to which position he had been elevated after the passing way of Madhorao Muley, the previous incumbent of that post. If Deoras was incapacitated by diabetes so could be Rajju Bhaiya.

It is a rather strange phenomenon that the leading men of the RSS should catch such an affliction. Diabetes is caused by over-eating and under-exercising whereas the RSS is proud of the spartan lifestyle of its members and regular physical exercise. It is a problem for the attention of the experts in medical sciences. The question that concerns us is why the choice for handing over the reins of the organisation should fall upon Rajju Bhaiya when he was not in the pink of health. There would have been no dearth of younger, healthier, persons in the top echelons of RSS one of whom could be given the critical responsibility.

The only clue to the mystery is the later part of the statement which reads:

> "Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh has a special role to play in the national life of our country; it has, in fact, come to occupy a distinguished place now. The entire country is looking towards the Sangh. Sangh has the great responsibility of providing right guidance to our national life. I have no doubt that with his innate competence and skill, his long experience of Sangh work and with the cooperation of dedicated friends and colleagues, Prof. Rajendra Singh would succeed in his mission".

On the face of it the statement sounds rather platitudinous with phrases like 'special role.... in national life', 'distinguished place', 'guidance to our national life' and 'innate competence' of Rajendra Singh to accomplish all that. Rather than dismissing it as that we can read significance in it if we look at the national scene and the position of RSS in mid-nineties.

In the course of the preceding seven decades the Sangh had travelled a long distance from its modest origins. Under Golwalkar it had moved out of the boundaries of Maharashtra and become an all-India organisation with branches throughout the length and breadth of the country. From a politically innocuous outfit it had developed into a voice to be reckoned with. Apart from a political party, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), it had developed significant front organisations like the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Shiksha Bharti.

After Golwalkar Deoras had developed it into a sprawling family (pariwar) of scores of front organisations which collectively imparted strength and significance to every campaign undertaken for the cause of Sangh. Deoras had taken over at a time when Congress had started slipping from its pre-eminent position. Sensing the opportunity to occupy the political space being yielded by the Congress he made deft moves in that direction. Unlike Golwalkar, he showed no hesitation in boldly intervening in political developments pushing the political front forward. Other front organisations were used both for preparing ground for political moves and also for exercising control to keep the political party under the RSS leash.

From margins of political life the Sangh Pariwar had moved to the centre-stage. A feeling had grown in its cadres that they were poised to step into the shoes of the Congress as the latter had not only dissipated its organisational strength in mutual recrimination of various factions that long years of power had bred but also strayed away from its ideological moorings. Many of its stalwarts had no hesitation in adopting the stance of its opponents if that helped them to get into seats of power. The Sangh swayamsewaks could beat them by flaunting their dedication. Their sense of sacrifice would appeal more in the face of cynical pursuit of power.

The opportunity was also attended by formidable challenge as the non-Congress parties, which in the 60's and 70's had ignored its communal character, were now developing apprehensions about its impact on national life. Particularly because the Sangh had grown more ambitious than before when it was prepared to play a second fiddle to a Jaya Prakash Narayan or a V.P. Singh. With the expansion of its organisation and influence the Sangh had come to believe that through the BJP, supported by other fronts, it could launch the final assault for its sway over the nation-state and transform it into a Hindu Rashtra of its dreams. Also it was no longer possible to maintain the myth that the RSS had nothing to do with the political party. The myth had been exploded by none other than the BJP president L.K. Advani himself who had attributed the spectacular success of his party in 1989 elections to the collective effort of the Sangh Pariwar.

In the circumstances the Sangh needed a steward who had a prestige beyond the shakha and who could interact with the political personalities with ease. It also had to overcome the impression that it was an organisation dominated by Maharashtrian Brahmins. The RSS work had expanded more in the Hindi belt than in other regions. India's centre of political gravity also was located in the same region, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Also Brahmin domination was coming to be looked upon with suspicion especially after the reservation controversy which demonstrated the assertiveness of lower castes.

Prof. Rajendra Singh filled the bill in the new circumstances. He was the scion of a well-to-do Rajput family, his father having held a high position under the British domination. Himself he was a distinguished professional having held the prestigious post of the Head of the Department of Nuclear Physics at Allahabad University, one of the premier educational institutions of the country.

Allahabad itself held an important place in India's political life as it was the centre of the nationalist movement during the freedom struggle. Most of the national leaders were known to the university dons as the university was a kind of nursery of freedom fighters. It was also a major recruitment centre for civil services both before and after independence.

With this background he was the most suited person to steer the ship of RSS through the rocks and shallows of the political ocean. Within RSS also he enjoyed high prestige having worked closely with such leading lights of the organisation as Bhaurao Deoras (who had supervised the political work), Nanaji Deshmukh (who had spread RSS tentacles in the field of social work as also developed institutions of political research), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya and Atal Behari Vajpayee who had built up political organisations and propaganda machinery. They all looked upon him with awe and respect on account of his academic position and wide knowledge of men and matters. He could command allegiance from the Sangh workers all over having guided them as a Sar Karyavah for a number of years.

The skill that Deoras looked for was the skill for political manipulation of which Rajju Bhaiya had given ample evidence when he guided the RSS underground during Emergency and established fruitful contacts with politicians outside the Sangh Pariwar.

The RSS chief in the mid-nineties was required to be more political than his predecessors. Under the Deoras stewardship the RSS had moved close to the boundaries of political power and it was time to cross the Lakshman rekha and intervene in national politics. Association with the J.P. Movement and subsequent participation of swayamsewaks in the Janata Party government had opened new avenues for political activism. RSS workers delegated to political work had got rich experience dealing with parties and politicians who basically differed from their way of thinking. Though the Janata Party experiment was not quite successful and they had to come out of it, they had seen the working of other parties from close quarters, assessed their strengths and weaknesses and above all made significant advances in the field of publicity along with expansion of Sangh work in foreign countries.

The BJP, after an initial hesitation to assert the RSS ideology, had come back on the path of Hindutva with the Rama Janmabhoomi movement and found a respectable place in the anti-Congress conclaves that had become fashionable in the 80's. After Advani's Ram Rath Yatra it had built a Hindu vote bank and felt confident of capturing power at the centre as a springboard for establishment of Hindu Rashtra of its dream. In the parliamentary elections of 1989 it had a quantum jump from two to 89 seats in Parliament and in 1991 it emerged as the largest non-Congress party, the main opposition.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 had been a setback in that most people developed abhorrence to its extremism which threatened social peace and development. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the main instrument of forging Ram and Hindutva as political weapons was banned. So was the RSS. The ban during Emergency could be easily converted into a fabulous opportunity because of the protective umbrella of the JP movement. This time not only was there no umbrella but the December 1992 incident had brought in bold relief its extremist-communal character; the deed was compared to the dastardly assassination of Gandhi by no less a person than the then Vice President of India.

It was perhaps this daunting situation that forced the decision for change at the top and a person was required who had the skill and sagacity to guide the sprawling Sangh Pariwar, grown into a veritable hydra.

The question when Rajju Bhaiya came to the gaddi was whether to go into hiding and then sue for peace as was done after Gandhi's assassination or to look for an umbrella as in the mid-seventies. Deoras was of the opinion that the Sangh should pick up the gauntlet and fight its way out. Rajju Bhaiya suited ideally because of his background. He must also have shown agreement with his mood of defiance. This is evident from his admiration of Deoras who, according to him, "carried on the Sangh work with his able guidance in clearing the many hurdles that came in the way after the passing away of Poojaneeya Guruji and demonstrated his fighting spirit".*

As the new chief, he preferred the strategy of taking the bull by its horns. The political situation was quite congenial for a combative approach. The Congress party was fast decomposing with various factions busy tarnishing one another's image. The other non-BJP parties were engaged in demolishing Congress in the fond hope of occupying the opposition space without developing a viable front which could inspire confidence in the people. The BJP,claiming distinction for discipline and personal integrity on account of nurture in the RSS, projected itself as 'a party with a difference' while at the same time earning respectability for its progenitor. The ideological opponents of the RSS, totally preoccupied with partisan quarrels, left the field free for its operations.

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* Speech of Prof. Rajendra Singh on nomination as Sar sangh Chalak. (*Organiser*, March 20, 1994).

How the new Sar sangh Chalak viewed the situation and the direction in which he proposed to lead the organisation became clear from the Karyavah's report at the KKM meeting, the first press conference he addressed and a special interview he gave to the RSS weekly *Organiser.* In each one of these the RSS can be seen shedding the inhibition about a political role and identifying totally and completely with the policies and practice of the BJP and the other RSS front organisations. The distinctive stamp of Rajju Bhaiya can be seen in his unabashed use of political idiom.

For instance, he analysed the national situation in the following terms:

"At present one finds growing polarisation between two opposite camps, the supporters of Hindutva and its opponents. This is reflected in all fields, including the economic, political, social and intellectual. Hindutva is the basic identity of this nation. We firmly believe in its ultimate triumph. All our efforts will be in that one direction".

When asked to define the opponents of Hindutva he did not name any political party but gave clear hints about it saying:

"They are those who call religion the opium, whose experiments have failed in Eastern Europe".

Obviously the target are the communists and, in line with the thinking of Golwalkar, he underlines that polarisation is between Hindutva and Communism. At the inception of the RSS, Gandhi was the target. Then Nehru and now the communists. The change in tactics does not reflect any modification of ideology. What it indicates is the tactics of identifying the major force of the time as the main opponent and then trying to disarm it by appropriating its agenda of the time. The communists cannot be called the main political force of the 90's but they are perceived as the only challenge as all others, especially Congress, seem to have lost their moorings. And they are sought to be disarmed by appropriating their economic agenda which at that time meant opposition to GATT and WTO.

The Dunkel proposals were being hotly discussed and the ruling Congress party was being pilloried on that score for compromising the policy of swadeshi and self-reliance, The RSS chief, therefore, did not rule out cooperation with them on issues like Dunkel. In other words on popular issues and opposition to the ruling party the RSS would not allow them to take all the credit. As in response to Emergency its policy would be 'to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds'. The policy of liberalisation had been welcomed by the BJP when it had been first introduced in the 1991 budget. But soon after it began to distance itself from that policy because opposition to it was growing on a broad political spectrum from Congress to communists.

Rajju Bhaiya identified opposition to Dunkel proposals as one of the three thrust areas under his leadership. In that movement he hoped that other parties, non-political organisations and personalities, would happily accept the cooperation of Sangh Pariwar. He did not mention the unexpressed advantage that the RSS hoped to reap. Such cooperation in 1975-77 had demolished the sharp antipathy to the RSS on account of its sectarian, fascist ideology. It had also provided opportunity for poaching into other parties.

He however ruled out merger of various parties as had happened in 1977. The situation then was different because at that time the RSS was keen to break its isolation and seek respectability in the mainstream political thinking. In the 90's the RSS had developed more self-confidence, its ideological opponents having compromised themselves by active association with its political and other fronts. The communist and socialist trade union organisations had joined hands with the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh against the economic policies of the Congress. The left intellectuals had appeared on the platform of the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch in opposition to the liberalisation regime ushered in by Narasimha Rao's finance minister Manmohan Singh; they derisively described those policies as Manmohanics. They also had no objection to sharing with BJP the policy of support to the V.P. Singh government. With what face would those people throw a stone on the BJP now? If they do they can easily be dismissed as lackeys of the discredited Congress. If they don't the RSS outfit would have smooth sailing. No need, therefore, to seek a merger with the non-BJP parties. With this perspective in mind he contemptuously dismissed any suggestion of merger with the remark that 'there can be no cross between a mouse and an elephant'. Such a vision had been entertained at the time when the BJP was founded with the objective of emerging as the alternative to Congress.

The operational tactics are indicated in response to a question on the methodology of pressurising the government against the signing of GATT. The RSS would give only the call and the movement would be built up by the front organsiations. How the BJP changed gear on the economic policy is also clear from his special interview with the *Organiser*. Asserting that there was no difference between BJP and RSS on the issue he said something which clearly reflects the relationship between the two. He referred to the recently concluded RSS Pratinidhi Sabha's meeting in Nagpur which had passed a resolution opposing the Dunkel Proposals and added: "The BJP may also adopt a resolution on the subject at its Hyderabad meeting next week".

That statement in a way spells out the relationship between the RSS and the BJP. The RSS has a unique character among social, cultural, religious and political organisations. In a democratic set up like India's, where the principle of universal suffrage prevails and political activity extends to all spheres of life, political parties act as the lynchpin. In order to spread their influence in different segments of life they develop subsidiary outfits like trade unions, students organisations and cultural groups. These outfits provide channels for access to various interest groups and help in their institutionalisation. Political parties represent aggregation of these various interests. Gandhi in his time had inspired and sponsored numerous such organisations which served as feeders to the Indian National Congress making it the umbrella organisation which coordinated and amalgamated various sectional interests into overall national interest.

The RSS differed with Gandhi on the concept of national interest. Rather than conceiving it as the aggregate of all interests, as did Gandhi, the RSS identified national interest with Hindu interest. Therefore, whereas in Gandhi's case the Congress played the lead role here the RSS interest becomes the key interest, the organisations sponsored by it treating it as the *pater familias*. Hedgewar called it the power house. The BJP (earlier BJS) was assigned the task of spreading RSS ideology in the political field. It drew its ideological framework as well as cadre infrastructure from the RSS. The latter remained free from pulls and pressures to which a political party is subject, called itself a cultural movement and exercised political influence through the political front, that is BJP.

An important feature of the RSS has been identified as its unswerving adherence to the Hindutva outlook. With the political party its relationship is paternal not fraternal; it gives direction and does not take direction. Even when the RSS sponsored party is merged into some other formation as was done in 1977 its members try to convert the other to its own point of view rather than tailoring itself to the requirements of the situation. The merger technique is adopted only when its only political front is too weak to stand on its own. When it is perceived that the need for the umbrella is not there it prefers to move on its own steam. Rajju Bhaiya's rejection of merging its political wing was based on the understanding that the Sangh Pariwar had developed sufficient clout with public to require crutches. That is what he meant by joint working even with the communists on the Dunkel issue. If you come with us well and good, if you do not you will be the loser in public eye, that is the attitude.

This methodology he pointed out was not new, it had been devised by Dr. Hedgewar and continued by his successor: "Today the RSS swayamsewaks are carrying on his (Hedgewar's) work on a country-wide scale through a number of like-minded institutions and with popular support. The massive Hindu awakening that we witness today is the culmination of what Doctorji had done earlier". By work he meant development of subsidiary organisations as far as possible on the basis of the growth of the parent body and availability of cadres.

The Kendriya Karyakari Mandal of the RSS in ts report after the takeover by Rajju Bhaiya, described the national scene as "a historic opportunity of all lovers of Hindutva and the Sangh Swayamsewaks in particular to rise to their full height of dedicated, disciplined and sustained efforts and overcome the anti-Hindutva challenges in every field".

The report was unapologetic about the demolition of the Babri Masjid and accused the government of provoking the deed: "The confidence trick sought to be played by the Central Government with the Hindu leaders, the unconscionable delay of the Allahabad High Court in coming out with its decision, the no-holds barred vicious propaganda barrage unleashed against the movement by the anti-Hindutva forces led by the Government, the Communists, the pseudo-secular journalists and political groups--all this had provoked the Hindu outburst on December 6". It did not concede that the deed was pre-planned though it did gloat over it as removal of "the disputed structure—that blot of foreign slavery on that holy spot".

The Sangh thus proposed to assertively project its Hindutva agenda whose components other than the Ayodhya shrine were intensification of action against the socalled conversion conspiracy, the removal of Bangladeshi infiltrators, removal of Article 370 and adopting a stiff attitude on the Kashmir issue plus taking steps for early formulation of a uniform civil code. All this was placed in the context of nation's security in accordance with the national unity and nationalism.

The Lok Sabha elections that followed showed that the popular response to the politics of Hindutva was not commensurate with its confidence in 'Hindu awakening'. The disunity and disarray of anti-BJP forces did help the BJP to emerge as the single largest party in the House in 1996 on the basis of a mere 20 per cent elector support but the party continued to be treated as a pariah. Invited to form the government it was not able to attract any outside support to have a majority and the Vajpayee government was obliged to resign within 13 days.

After 1996 the BJP changed tactics and took to coalition politics of which the worst display was seen in U.P. There it first joined hands with a party, the BSP with which it had hostile relationship, on a rotational formula to head the government. Later, after break with that partner, it formed its own government with the help of defectors from other parties and offering ministerial positions to several history sheeters. It was the worst demonstration of unprincipled pursuit of power; even the apologists of the Sangh defended it only as *'apat-dharma'* (compulsion of circumstances).

The experiment however was later extended to the Centre when after the 1998 elections the BJP joined hands with several other outfits with which it had nothing common morally or politically, at least in terms of its stated principles. The 18-party coalition had an uneasy 13-month existence during which it came under severe pressure from both within and outside. It began life with the open demonstration that ultimate power lay in the hands of RSS; replacement of Vajpayee's choice of Jaswant Singh as Finance Minister with Yashwant Sinha was conclusive proof of that.

Subsequently it was kept on tenterhooks by the blatant contradiction of government stand on the Ayodhya issue, Kashmir and civil code. The worst was the Christian-bashing by VHP and Bajrang Dal highlighted by the heinous crime of burning alive of a missionary and his two minor children. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and Swadeshi Jagaran Manch castigated the government on its economic policies which were far more accomodative of MNCs and WTO than the earlier governments.

The contradictions that emerged during this period have posed a serious test for the continued harmonious coexistence of the RSS and the BJP. For example on the question of the Ayodhya shrine the BJP-led government took the stand that it would abide by the court verdict and not permit its violation. The BJP spokespersons, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the RSS itself on the other hand refused to accept the jurisdiction of the courts in the matter because it relates to the faith, as they said, of millions of Hindus.

Also on the question of atrocities against Christians force of public opinion and pressure of coalition partners forced Prime Minister Vajpayee to take a stand which was not identical to the stand of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Indeed there appeared a sharp difference, at least of stance, when L.K. Advani gave a clean chit to Bajrang Dal on the murder of Father Staines and his children. While Advani was inclined to blatantly shield the Sangh Pariwar, Vajpayee showed reluctance.

Such display of moderation by Vajpayee provoked sharp criticism within the Sangh Pariwar including the BJP. The Pariwar also showed unease when, faced with the prospect of elections, Vajpayee took the initiative to stitch together the alliance partners into a National Democratic Alliance and jettisoned the BJP agenda. Will the party cadres and workers of sister organisations evince the same kind of enthusiasm for the Alliance as they would have for BJP going ahead on its own agenda, has become a moot question. The ardour of the cadres had abated when the BJP under Vajpayee in 1984 seemed to have cooled down on the Hindutva issues and tried to sail with the slogans like Gandhian socialism. The resolution of such contradictions is the main task before the RSS chief as the political wing develops more and more taste for power.

Another problem that has come up is the growing taste for goodies among those swayamsewaks who have enjoyed the perks of power. Not only had corruption creeped in but it had created factionalism and dissensions of which there was crude display in Gujarat.

On the eve of the golden jubilee of RSS it is faced with the test whether it can resist the corrupting influence of power and retain its image of moral purity and spirit of sacrifice.

Chapter-XI

Murder of the Greatest Hindu

"On 30th January, 1948 while Bapu was on his way to a prayer meeting three shots were fired at him from a revolver. Bapu fell and died soon after. Nathuram Godse was the man responsible for the murder. He had been a worker of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in Poona and also the editor of a paper,"* wrote Morarji Desai in his autobiography published in 1974.

The name of the RSS has been associated with the murder of Gandhi ever since the ghastly deed was done, the vehement protestations of the RSS to the contrary notwithstanding. The charge has stuck in spite of the fact that the RSS chief, who had been arrested and put in the dock along with the other accused, had been cleared of the charge at an early stage of the trial. It was recalled by the then Vice President K.R. Narayanan when he commented that the demolition of Babri Masjid (at Ayodhya) was the most heinous crime after the assassination of Gandhi.

According to the protagonists of the RSS it is the result of 'a communist conspiracy' to defame and demoralise 'a nationalist organisation', a political gimmick employed by those who are afraid of its growing popularity and influence. Even if that were true it could be said that they are getting a taste of their own medicine in the sense that their chief weapon in public controversies and political battles is character assassination. They would attribute the worst kind of criminal motives to a person who dares to differ from them or criticise their theories and practices.

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* Morarji Desai, *Story of My Life*, p. 248.

I recall an incident of 1946. In a newspaper a photograph of Jawaharlal Nehru had appeared which showed somebody lighting his cigarette. That photograph was cut out and kept by a number of Sangh workers in that area of Hoshiarpur (where I was also a minor functionary of the RSS) to be shown to simple-minded, credulous small-town folk as an evidence of the personal degradation of the man. It was presented as a kind of obscenity. While showing that to people the RSS men would comment: "Look, if this man is not ashamed of being photographed with a cigarette between his lips what would he not be doing in private?" One has only to imagine the reaction, particularly of the middle class (the petit bourgeoisie as they are called) in the social milieu of a mofussil town. Other photographs in this repertoire were those of Nehru shaking hands with Lady Mountbatten and his sister Vijayalaxmi Pandit wearing a sleeveless blouse and sitting, bare-headed, around a table in all-male company of Indians and foreigners.

This incident is only the tip of the iceberg that is their arsenal of character assassination; the morbid details which they give are such that no civilised person would like to repeat. For obvious reasons these things do not appear in the press, except as innuendoes and insinuations and that too only in the house journals of the RSS like the *Organiser.* But that is heard every day in the streets so that the uncommitted and the uninitiated feel exasperated and, on hearing such charges, only say: 'Damn it, don't they say all kinds of things about other people.' This atmosphere, in a way, helps the RSS because the contention becomes pro - and anti - and nobody bothers about going into the facts of the case and understand the validity of the charge or the lack of it.

The loss of Gandhi to India at a crucial juncture of Indian history should not, and cannot, be treated so lightly. On the understanding of the phenomenon depends quite a lot of the future of at least this part of the world because the developments of India-Pakistan relations and Hindu-Muslim relations would certainly have been significantly different but for the removal of Gandhi from the scene. The destruction of what Mountbatten described as 'one-man peace-keeping force' is not something to be treated as a mere allegation going round in a political maelstrom.

In his broadcast to the nation after the murder on January 30, 1948 Jawaharlal Nehru said: "A mad man has put an end to his life, for I can only call him mad who did it, and yet there has been enough poison spread in this country during the past years and months, and this poison has had an effect on people's minds. We must face this poison, and we must face all the perils that encompass us, and face them not madly or badly but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them."* Later in a meeting in Ramlila Grounds, Delhi, he again pointed out: "What we have to see is how and why even one man among 400 millions could cause this terrible wound on our country. How an atmosphere was created in which people like him could act in that manner and yet dare to call themselves Indians."**

Facing the poison and getting rid of it implies spotting its source and treating it. Jawaharlal had traced the source to the RSS. In a letter to Sardar Patel on February 26, 1948 he wrote: "More and more I have come to the conclusion that Bapu's murder was not an isolated business but part of a much wider campaign organised chiefly by the RSS."***

If the conclusion or diagnosis of the ailment, whatever you call it, arrived at by Jawaharlal is unfounded, the sooner it is rejected the better because then only would it be possible to look for the source of poison elsewhere and deal with it adequately. And if one goes through the newspapers of the period one finds that he was not alone to have come to that conclusion; Ram Manohar Lohia, J.P. Narayan and several other people concurred with him and, in fact, criticised the then Home Minister for showing leniency towards the RSS. We know that several of these gentlemen, in later years, thought it fit to act in alliance with the RSS and tended to curb their earlier anti - RSS ferocity. But that can be clearly seen as more a concession to political expediency than concern for truth. The case of Morarji Desai in this regard is very pertinent.

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* Jawaharlal Nehru, *Independence and After (1946-49)*, p. 17.

** *The Hindustan Times*, February 3, 1948.

*** Durga Das (ed.) *Sardar Patel's Correspondence (1945-50)*, Vol. 6, p. 55.

We have quoted his firm opinion in this matter, particularly the relationship between the RSS and the assassin, as expressed in his autobiography. This quotation used to be read out by a guide at the New Delhi Gandhi Smriti, P. N. Damodaran Nayar by name. It was a part of the narration of the story of martyrdom and no objections had ever been raised till the coming of Janata Party to power. On October 8, 1977 when Morarji, the Prime Minister, accompanied by his colleague Sikandar Bakht, the Minister of Housing, paid a visit to Gandhi Smriti, this part of the guide's narration was brought to his notice, apparently by some RSS members and sympathisers, as something objectionable. "The Prime Minister's spontaneous reaction", reports the guide who was a witness to it, "was that these were facts of history and that nobody can change history."* Thereafter the guide was beaten up by some Vidyarthi Parishad boys and was unceremoniously dismissed by the management under the control and influence of the Housing Ministry. When this question was raised in Parliament Morarji declared on the floor of the House that he no longer held the opinion which he had expressed in his autobiography. The reason for this somersault on the part of the octogenarian Prime Minister is too obvious to bear repetition. It however provides a glaring instance of the defence of the RSS being motivated by considerations of political expediency.

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* P.N. Damodaran Nayar, Editor's Note to Curran, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

And yet objectivity demands that we have full look at the case of the RSS. We quote in full, including the emphasis on points, what has been issued for public by the publication department of the RSS, Suruchi Sahitya:

"RSS AND GANDHI MURDER

"In a number of speeches during the emergency and earlier, Smt. Indira Gandhi condemned RSS elements as the assassins of Mahatma Gandhi. We are really amazed to read it. This is very grave and heinous charge and no responsible person is expected to make it, for it is totally false in view of the following facts.

"In the first place, it is noteworthy that in his letter to Sri Jawaharlal Nehru (dated 27th February 1948) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Home Minister, Government of India, wrote:

"*Sardar Patel's Testimony:* "I have kept myself almost in daily touch with the progress of the investigations regarding Bapu's assassination case. I devoted a large part of my evening to discussing with Sanjivi the day's progress and giving instructions to him on any points that arise. All the main accused have given long and detailed statements of their activities. In one case, the statement extends to ninety typed pages. From their statements it is quite clear that no part of the conspiracy took place in Delhi. The centres of activities were Poona, Bombay, Ahmednagar and Gwalior. Delhi was of course the terminating point of their activity, but by no means its centre; nor do they seem to have spent more than a day or two at a time, and that only twice between 19 and 30 January. *It also clearly emerges from the statements that the RSS was not involved in it at all.* It was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha-that hatched the conspiracy and saw it through. It also appears that the conspiracy was limited to some ten men of whom all except two have been got hold of. Every bit of these statements is being carefully checked up and verified and scrutinised and, where necessary, followed up. Sanjivi devotes a considerable time every day to it. Senior officers of Bombay and CP are in charge of investigation. Delhi police hardly comes in the picture" *(Sarder Patel's Correspondence, Vol.* 6, 1945-50, edited by Durga Das).

"Thereafter the Gandhi Murder Trial commenced on June 22, 1948 in the historic Red Fort in Delhi before Shri Atmacharan, who was specially appointed for the purpose. Appeal was heard by a full bench of East Punjab High Court, at Shimla from May 2, 1949. Final judgement was delivered on June 21, 1949 and the guilty punished.

"Many persons who are educated and old enough have followed the proceedings of the trial as they appeared in papers in those days. Sri C.K. Daphtary, the then Advocate General, Bombay, was in charge of the prosecution. The prosecution in putting its case before the learned judge did not try to involve the RSS in the conspiracy. *It did not even hint, much less prove, even the remotest connection of the RSS with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. The RSS is not blamed anywhere in the judgement delivered in the case.*

"Kapoor Commission: In November 1966, the Government of India again instituted another inquiry into Gandhi murder. A commission was set up under Shri J.L. Kapoor, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, to make a fresh and thorough inquiry into the conspiracy to murder Mahatma Gandhi, though in a different context. The commission sat at different places and examined 101 witnesses and 407 documents before it published its report in 1969. *The commission also cleared the RSS of any connection with the crime.*

"One of the important witnesses was Shri R.N. Banerjee, I.C.S,, (witness 19) who was the Home Secretary of the Central Government at the time of the murder. The evidence of Shri R.N. Banerjee was:

> *"It has not been proved that they (the accused) were members of the RSS"-(Kapoor Commission Report,* Part I, p. 165).
>
> "The witness further says that even if the RSS had been banned earlier, it would not have affected the conspirators or the course of events, "because *they (the accused) have not been proved to have been members of the RSS nor has that organisation been shown to have a hand in the murder" (Ibid.,* p. 186).
>
> Shri R.N. Banerjee further stated, "Although RSS was banned it should not be taken to be an acceptance by the Government of the allegation that the murder of Mahatma Gandhi was by the members of RSS as such" *(Ibid.,* Part II, p. 62).
>
> The Commission comments:
>
> *"In Delhi also there is no evidence that the RSS as such was indulging in violent activities against Mahatma Gandhi or the top Congress leaders" (Ibid, p.* 66).
>
> "The facts are self-evident and more eloquent than all the mispropaganda by the interested parties."

If there had ever been a simple statement that the RSS denounces and repudiates the action of Godse as also the reasons he gave for it, the charge could be cleared. It would at least have been possible to believe that a change of heart had taken place after the shocking manifestation of their 'culture'. But no! The defence is based on what they think are the chinks in the argument of the other side. And that makes the defence worse because the whole argument suffers from *suggestio falsi, suppressio veri.* A tendency to politicalise the issue and take advantage of the present political atmosphere has been betrayed in picking on Indira Gandhi as the accuser. The period of emergency has also been hinted at to vitiate thinking by wrapping it in the haze of strong sentiments about the emergency days. It should not however be forgotten that the charge had been made and maintained by even those whom the RSS may not find it easy to dismiss as irresponsible.

Coming to the substantial part, take what they call Sardar Patel's testimony which is a letter that the Sardar had written in reply to the above-mentioned letter by Jawaharlal Nehru. One would like to know why they have not cared to look at another letter, in the same volume, which the Sardar had sent to Dr. S.P. Mookherjee in reply to his entreaty in behalf of the RSS and the Mahasabha. There is a very significant passage in it which reads:

> "As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the case relating to Gandhiji's murder is sub judice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organisations, but *our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible.* There is no doubt in my mind that the extreme section of the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in this conspiracy. *The activities of the RSS constituted a clear threat to the existence of Government and the state.* Our reports show that those activities, despite the ban, have not died down. Indeed, as time has marched on, the RSS circles are becoming more defiant and are indulging in their subversive activities in an increasing measure." *

The letter of February 27 written to Jawaharlal is quoted but the letter of July 18 written to Dr. Mookherjee is not quoted. Why? And a subsequent one of September 11, 1948 addressed to the RSS chief Golwalkar himself is also forgotten although it is part of a publication issued by the Prakashan Vibhag of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, Karnataka. We quote it, both in the interest of fair argument and for correcting the distortion of Sardar's image that the enlistment as defence witness by the RSS entails. Lest we be charged of misquotation or partial quotation we quote in full without making any changes:-

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* Durga Das, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

Aurangzeb Road
New Delhi
Date: 11th Sept. 1948

Brother Sri Golwalkar,

Received your letter dated 11th August. Jawaharlal has also sent me your letter of the same date.

You are very well aware of my views about the RSS. I have expressed those thoughts at Jaipur in December last and at Lucknow in January. The people had welcomed those views. I had hoped that your people also would accept them. But they appear to have had no effect on RSS persons, nor was there any change in their programmes. There can be no doubt that the RSS did service to the Hindu Society. In the areas where there was the need for help and organisation, the young men of the RSS protected women and children and strove much for their sake. No person of understanding could have a word of objection regarding that. But the objectionable part arose when they, burning with revenge, began attacking Mussalmans. Organising the Hindus and helping them is one thing but going in for revenge for its sufferings on innocent and helpless men, women and children is quite another thing.

Apart from this, their opposition to the Congress, that too of such virulence, disregarding all considerations of personality, decency or decorum, created a kind of unrest among the people. *All their speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison in order to enthuse the Hindus and organise for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the invaluable life of Gandhiji.* Even an iota of the sympathy of the Government or of the people no more remained for the RSS. In fact opposition grew. Opposition turned more severe, *when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji's death.* Under these conditions it became inevitable for the Government to take action against the RSS.

Since then, over six months have elapsed. *We had hoped that after this lapse of time, with full and proper consideration the RSS persons would come to the right path. But from the reports that come to me, it is evident that attempts to put fresh life into their same old activities are afoot.* I once again ask you to give your thought to my Jaipur and Lucknow speeches, and accept the path I had indicated for the RSS. I am quite certain that therein lies the good of the RSS and of the country and moving on that path we can join hands in achieving the welfare of our country. Of course, you are aware that we are passing through delicate times. It is the duty of every one from the highest to the lowliest in the country to contribute his mite, in whatever way possible, to the service of the country. In this delicate hour there is no place for party conflicts and old quarrels. I am thoroughly convinced that the RSS men can carry on their patriotic endeavour only by joining the Congress and not by keeping separate or by opposing. I am glad that you have been released. I hope that you will arrive at proper decision after due consideration of what I have said above. With regard to the restrictions imposed upon you I am in correspondence with the CP Government. I shall let you know after receiving their reply.

Yours
(Sd.) VALLABH BHAI PATEL
Offers Vandematram

(Rendered from the original in Hindi)*

The next argument is based upon the voluminous report of the Kapoor Commission. With regard to that the first thing to be kept in mind is that the question of direct involvement of the RSS was not written in the terms of reference of the inquiry. Yet because it has been referred to it is better that we examine the Report. For obvious reasons it has been thought fit to quote the evidence of only one witness* and omit other evidence which is no less relevant. For example the deposition of J.N. Sahni which the Commission sums up as follows:

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* *Justice on Trial: Historic Document of Guruji-Government Correspondence*, pp. 26-28;
N.B. This letter also, incidentally, clarifies the misunderstanding created that the Sardar had invited them to join the Congress; the invitation is for rethinking and change of heart and then giving it a concrete shape by merger into the Congress The same thing JP tried to accomplish later and failed.

> "19.56 Mr. J.N. Sahni (witness No. 95) *has deposed to a secret organisation but did not directly mention it as RSS. He said that it was being openly discussed in those days, i.e. about the time of the Birla House bomb, that there was a secret organisation with about 6 lakh volunteers which would stage a coup d'etat* and the organisation had secret cells in different parts of India including the Punjab, Maharashtra, etc. It was then being rumoured that its leader was Golwalkar, Bhopatkar or Dr. Khare and that its volunteers were being trained in Alwar, Bharatpur and some other places with the objective of overthrowing the government after killing the top leaders and when Mahatma Gandhi was murdered it was considered to be a part of the plan and stringent measures were taken. He also said that there was a secret political movement helped by some princes through their chieftains, creating a fifth column in India to take over when the British power withdrew, at least in their respective states. The princes named by him were Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Baroda and Bhopal. This movement was led by Golwalkar from Nagpur, and Bhopatkar from Poona, and the concentration of leadership was there."

On this the Commission comments in the next para:

> *"19.57 As far as the Commission is aware, Guruji Golwalkar was and is the head of the RSS movement.* Mr

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* The said witness, R.N. Banerjee, was a member of the ICS and we have known, on unimpeachable authority of Shri K.R. Malkani, that there was an RSS shakha consisting of ICS members. Mr. Banerjee could have been influenced by that shakha, if not its actual member.

> Sahni did not ascribe these activities to the RSS but just mentioned a secret movement."
>
> Sahni's reference to the secret movement helped by some princes through chieftains gets elaborated in the evidence of Hooja and connects it with the RSS:
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> "19.60 Mr. Hooja's reports, Ex. 95, show that *at Alwar there was a training camp of RSS in May- June 1947 which received the patronage of the Prime Minister Dr.Khare and the Home Minister with the knowledge of the ruler.* It was also reported that both these Ministers took a prominent part in helping the RSS activities and the Prime Minister extended it the fullest patronage. They received military training in the beginning of February and were put up in one of the military barracks. They did firing practice with muzzle loaders and also secret training in rifle and revolver practice."

There was also the evidence of B.B.S. Jetley, a senior Intelligence Officer, who had prepared 600-700 cases against the RSS and had told Sardar Patel that 'something terrible may happen'. The Commission reports: "When he told Sardar Patel that something serious would happen he did not mean murder of Mahatma Gandhi but it might have happened to Sardar Patel or to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru." It surely does not absolve the RSS but indicates wider dimensions of a possible conspiracy in which the organisation was involved.*

Now we come to the question involved in the assertion that although a legal luminary like C.K. Daphtary, the then Advocate General, was prosecuting the case in the court he 'did not even hint, much less prove even the remotest connection of RSS'. That, dear friends, does not vouch for the innocence of the RSS or that it was not an agency which created the atmosphere in which one man dared to act the way he did. He certainly was not a mad man as was the first impression of Jawaharlal Nehru immediately after the murder. If it proves anything it is that those at the helm of affairs thought it fit to stick to the letter of the law. The assassin had confessed to the crime and denied the charge of conspiracy at the instance of any party or person. In fact he asserted: "The prosecution's attempt to make out that I was a mere tool in some one else's hands is an aspersion which is far from the truth. Indeed, it is a perversion of it."*

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* See *Secular Democracy,* October 1970.

The Advocate General had the brief to bring to book the person who had committed the crime and his associates, if any.

The jurisprudence that India followed then, and does even now, does not treat a philosophy, an organisation or a group liable to punishment even when a crime of such momentous import is involved, Even if it were proved that assassin Godse was a member of the RSS at that point of time it would not legally prove the culpability of the RSS unless it could be established that a responsible body of the organisation had formally met, taken the decision to assassinate Gandhi and duly assigned the task to Nathuram Godse. It was obviously not there on record and the Advocate General would have only chased a mirage if he had taken the line of proving that Godse was only a tool in the hands of the RSS. Like a good criminal lawyer and advocate he concentrated on the person of Godse and his immediate associates whose complicity and abetment was beyond reasonable doubt.

Let it be clear that the brief of Daphtary was not political but personal. And the handicaps in going after the RSS were too many. In the first place the RSS maintains no register of membership, issues no membership cards, charges no fee against receipt and there is no way of establishing before a court of law that a certain person is a member and invariably acts according to its discipline or diktat. Secondly, the RSS is not an organisation of bold revolutionaries who would declare their intentions. in advance. In fact that is the basic difference between revolutionary or communist violence and counter-revolutionary or fascist violence of the RSS kind. Those like Bhagat Singh who take to the former are not apologetic about it, they keep secrecy about an action only in order to ensure its success; the latter are ashamed of owning their deed and try to keep it a secret even after it has been accomplished. One is never in doubt about the moral justification of the deed while the other is never sure of it, rather, does it as a crime.

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* Gopal Godse, *May it Please Your Honour: Statement of Nathuram Godse.* p.39.

What is the truth about Godse's RSS connection? The RSS has been at pains for years to deny that he was ever a member of the RSS. Although Curran had discovered it in 1950-51* the information remained buried in the files of the Institute of Pacific Relations** till it was referred to by a writer on the Jana Sangh, Craig Baxter, in 1968. Godse himself had stated before the Court: "I have worked for several years in RSS and subsequently joined the Hindu Mahasabha ......"*** The most significant is the revelation by his brother about the last moments of his life: "On reaching the platform they recited a verse of devotion to the Motherland:

नमस्ते सदा वत्सले मातृभुमे, त्वया हिन्दुभूमे, सुखंवर्धितो ऽ हम् ।
महामंगले पुण्य भूमे त्वदर्थे, पतित्वेष काया नमस्ते नमस्ते ।।

This is the opening verse of the RSS prayer sung in every shakha and outsiders are not acquainted with it, except for academic reasons. At the time of Godse's membership of the RSS, around 1932--as admitted in these statements--this prayer was not sung even in the RSS. As we have already indicated, in those days the Marathi-Hindi prayer was in currency. The Sanskrit prayer, of which this verse forms a part, was adopted only in 1940. How did Godse take it up as a kind of epitaph on his life? The denial of connection surrounds the whole affair with an air of suspicion.

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* Referring to the organisational tour of Hedgewar in Maharashtra in 1932 Curran writes, 'One of his advisers on this tour was Nathuram Godse, who sixteen years later was to fire the pistol that killed Mahatma Gandhi. Godse had joined the RSS in 1930 winning prominence as a speaker and organiser; he left the Sangh in 1934 because Hedgewar refused to make the RSS a political organisation" *(op. cit.*, pp. 18-19).

** The non-publication of Curran's study may be altogether innocent but it is intriguing. The Institute sponsored after this a study by Minoo R. Masani on the communist movement in modern India. The later work was promptly published as *The Communist Party of India* in 1954 by Derek Verschoyle in association with the Institute. *Why?*

*** Godse, *ibid.*, p. 46.

Having scrutinised the arguments of the RSS we would like to assert once again that it was nobody's case that the RSS provided the pistol and the other means with which Godse murdered Gandhi. Everybody, from Jawaharlal Nehru downwards, has been talking of the kind of atmosphere and the culture that induces thoughts and sentiments which lead to such a heinous act. Before we proceed to analyse the attitude of the RSS towards Gandhi it may be relevant to ask whether there was grief or jubilation in the RSS circles. The RSS chief had issued a formal condemnation and also declared that they would observe mourning for 13 days. But what was happening in the shakhas? Gandhi's private Secretary Pyarelal writes:

> "A letter which Sardar Patel received after the assassination from a young man, who according to his own statement had been gulled into joining the RSS organisation but was later disillusioned, described how members of the RSS at some places had been instructed beforehand to tune in their radio sets on the fateful Friday for the 'good news'. After the news, sweets were distributed in RSS circles at several places, including Delhi. When the RSS was later banned by an order of the government, the local police chief in one of the Indian states, according to the Sardar's correspondent, sent word to the organisers to close their office 'for thirteen days' as a sign of mourning, and disperse but not to disband. The rot was so insidious and widespread that only the supreme sacrifice could arrest or remove it."*

Pyarelal's book has been cited as one of the evidences by the Kapoor Commission (paras 19.64 and 19.65) and it reads:

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* Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase,* p. 756.

"19.64 At page 687 of his book Pyarelal had said the following:

"The RSS was a communalist, para-military, fascist organisation, controlled from Maharashtra. The key positions were held almost exclusively by the Maharashtrians. Their declared object was to set up Hindu Raj. They had adopted the slogan, Muslims clear out of India. At the time they were not very active, at least overtly, but it was being darkly hinted that they were only waiting for all the Hindus and Sikhs in West Pakistan to be evacuated. They would then wreak full vengeance on the Indian Muslims for what Pakistan had done.

"Gandhiji was determined not to be a living witness to such a tragedy. The Muslims were in a minority in the Indian Union. Why should they feel insecure as to their future as equal citizens in the Indian Union? There was much they had to answer for and correct. But it was up to the majority community to be magnanimous and to forgive and forget."

"19.65 At page 751 Pyarelal has written that there was a vast network of an organisation under the direct encouragement, direction and control of RSS with the object of planning and carrying out pogroms against Muslims as a part of the cruel war of brutality and counter-brutality, reprisals and counter reprisals.... their activities including collection and distribution of arms and ammunition."

Pyarelal, in fact, provides the clue to the soil and the seed which yielded the mind that issued itself in the crime:

"Maharashtra has a strong tradition of militant Hindu nationalism. It is the citadel of Brahmin orthodoxy of a most exclusive and rigid type. In self-dedication, patriotism, sacrifice and renunciation, it has produced exemplars which it would be difficult to excel. But its idealism has very often been mixed with a rugged pragmatism and cynical view of life and politics which was diametrically opposed to that of Gandhiji. Some of the proponents of this outlook had somehow come to feel, quite unwarrantably, that the rise of Gandhiji's philosophy was the cause of the memory of that great leader of Maharashtra, the late Lokamanya Tilak, and the premier position that Maharashtra held in the country's politics during his lifetime, being eclipsed. They regarded Gandhiji's political leadership and movement of non-violence with a strong, concentrated feeling of antipathy and frustration which found expression in a sustained campaign of calumny against Gandhiji for over a quarter of a century. The fact that in spite of it a growing section in Maharashtra rallied to Gandhiji's movement further exasperated them and deepened their sense of frustration. It was this section that had tried to bomb Gandhiji in 1934 at Poona while he was engaged in his anti-untouchability campaign. *Their plans this time were far more systematic and thorough, and included such refinements as conditioning the minds of the youth for their prospective task by making them wear, as a part of their training, photos of Congress leaders like Pandit Nehru and others besides Gandhiji inside their shoes, and using the same for target practice with fire-arms etc.*

"Angered by Gandhiji's peace mission in Delhi, this group decided to remove him from the scene. Gandhiji's fast and subsequent release by the Indian government of 55 crores to Pakistan enraged them still further, On top of it, atrocity stories and tales of unimaginable crimes against Hindu womanhood kept pouring in from Kashmir. Popular sentiment was systematically worked up by deliberately concocted propaganda."*

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* *Ibid.*, p. 751.

We have already gone into the Gandhi-RSS relationship at some length earlier. It is enough to point out that every RSS man, from Hedgewar downwards, castigated Gandhi as the harbinger of the policy of appeasement while they were also all the time keen to make peace with him on terms that he should only bless them and not go into ideological questions. Hedgewar made the first major attempt in 1934 when the first signs of manifest estrangement between the RSS and the Congress came on surface. But he found Gandhi too firmly rooted in reason for the beliefs he held and propagated to be converted to the ideas of Hindu nationalism and maintaining status quo in caste etc.

The tragic happenings in 1947 again brought them in open, direct confrontation--perhaps more bitter than the earlier one. The language of Golwalkar became extraordinarily strident. He thought the Congress tradition of Gandhi and Nehru was making the Hindu Society 'impotent' and 'imbecile'. To adequately communicate the quality of Golwalkar's utterances of that period one has to quote at length because otherwise the reader is likely to doubt the very veracity of the statement, so astounding is the quality of pronouncements. Here is what he says about the policy of communal unity:

> "Thus, due to the utter lack of will and conviction on the part of our leaders to face the Muslim intransigence squarely from the standpoint of undiluted nationalism, were sown the seeds of Muslim appeasement. In their phantom chase of achieving new unity and new nationality, our leaders raised the slogan of 'Hindu-Muslim unity' and declared that anything that stood in its way should be forgotten. As they dared not tell the Muslim to forget his separatism, they pitched upon the docile Hindu for all their preachings. The first thing they preached was that our nationality could not be called Hindu, that even our land could not be called by its traditional name Hindustan, as that would have offended the Muslim. The name 'India' given by the British was accepted. Taking that name, the

'new nation' was called the 'Indian Nation'. And the Hindu was asked to rename himself 'Indian'."*

Thenceforward he comes to downright obscenity and abuse:

"The exhortation of the leaders did not stop at that. The Hindu was asked to ignore, even submit meekly to the vandalism and atrocities of the Muslims. In effect, he was told: Forget all that the Muslims have done in the past and all that they are now doing to you. If your worshipping in the temple, your taking out gods in procession in the streets irritates the Muslims, then don't do it. If they carry away your wives and daughters, let them. Do not obstruct them. That would be violence. To cite an instance, in those days, a Hindu girl was abducted by a Muslim in NWFP and the problem was posed before the Central Assembly where our prominent leaders were present. A Muslim Congress leader lightly brushed aside the incident saying: 'After all boys are boys and girls are girls'. At that insulting remark not one of the Hindu leaders present there raised a voice of protest. None dared to ask why, if it was just a case of boys and girls, it always happened that the Muslim *boys* kidnapped only Hindu girls and not Muslim girls? On the other hand, they enjoyed it as a piece of humour!

"Whenever the Muslims slaughtered cows to insult Hindu feelings, the Hindus were told that it was the religious right of Muslims and that, being tolerant to other religions, they should not object to it. Although there is not a word of sanction in Quran for cow-slaughter, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had given the Muslims a written assurance that on the advent of swaraj cow-slaughter would not be banned keeping in view their 'religious sentiments'.

"Once a notable Hindu personality of those days, in a largely attended public meeting, declared: 'There is no swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity and the simplest way

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* Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 149-50.

> in which this unity can be achieved is for all Hindus to become Muslims'! He did not even realise that then it would not be Hindu-Muslim unity but only Muslim unity as there would be no Hindus at all !"*

The reference to Jawaharlal is clearly made but to Gandhi it is by implication; it is however unmistakable for any discerning reader. And the peroration goes on so that a little further we read:

> "In other words, the Hindu was told that he was imbecile, that he had no spirit, no stamina to stand on his own legs and fight for the independence of his motherland and all this had to be injected into him in the form of Muslim blood. What a shame, what a misfortune that our own leaders should have come forward to knock out the ancient and indomitable faith in ourselves and destroy our spirit of self confidence and self-reliance, which is the very life-breath of a people! **Those who declared 'No swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity' have thus perpetrated the greatest treason to our society. They have committed the most heinous sin of killing the life-spirit of a great and ancient people.** To preach impotency to a society which gave rise to a Shivaji who, in the words of the great historian Jadunath Sarkar, 'proved to the whole world that the Hindu has drunk the elixir of immortality' and to break the self-confident and proud spirit of such a great and virile society has no parallel in the history of the world for sheer magnitude of its betrayal."**

And after this so-called RSS view of the historical process preceding partition he makes the pronouncement: "The direct result was that Hindus were defeated at the hands of Muslims in 1947."***

These views were projected through the RSS media in the form of articles, stories, cartoons etc.

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* Golwalkar, *ibid,* pp. 150-51.

** *Ibid.,* pp. 151-152.

*** *Ibid.,* p. 152.

The RSS is not, according to its votaries, an active agent. In a sense it is true; the RSS never decides to do anything nor does it ever put on record any orders or instructions given to its members. If a deed finds approval of the public it comes forth to claim the credit, if it is otherwise it is promptly disavowed without as much as batting an eyelid.

In 1947-48 while the RSS men were being fed on the diet a specimen of which is given above, the leaders were keen to convince Gandhi that they were not anti-Muslim and were prepared to cooperate with his peace-keeping efforts. Golwalkar met Gandhi in New Delhi and tried to convince him that all the latter had heard about the RSS men killing Muslims was wrong and that their organisation was 'for protecting Hinduism, not for killing Muslims'. Gandhi used to keep himself posted with the happenings in the city and yet as Pyarelal says, "Gandhiji, with his boundless faith in human nature and in the redemptive power of truth, felt he must give everybody a chance to make good his bona fides. It was something that they did not glory in wrong doing." Gandhi asked Golwalkar and his colleagues to issue a statement repudiating the allegations and condemning the loot and violence. They wanted to wriggle out by saying that it could be done on their behalf by Gandhi himself. He told them if what they said was sincerely meant the public should know it from their lips. They must have been convinced of the failure of their mission when during the meeting, in response to somebody's praise for the good work by the RSS at Wah refugee camp and showing discipline, courage and capacity for hard work, Gandhi remarked: "But don't forget even so had Hitler's Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini."*

Then the old Hedgewar technique was used and they invited Gandhi to an RSS rally in the Bhangi colony of New Delhi. RSS leaders prefer to say that he had himself expressed a desire to visit the shakha. Whatever be the truth the fact remains that they failed to change his attitude. What transpired at the rally is reported by Pyarelal thus:

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* Quoted by Pyarelal, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

> "In welcoming Gandhiji to their rally, the leader described him as 'a great man that Hinduism has produced'. Gandhiji in his reply observed that while he was certainly proud of being a Hindu, his Hinduism was neither intolerant nor exclusive. The beauty of Hinduism as he understood it was that it absorbed the best that was in all faiths. If Hindus believed that in India there was no place for non-Hindus on equal and honourable terms and Muslims, if they wanted to live in India, must be content with an inferior status, or if the Muslims thought that in Pakistan Hindus could live only as a subject race on the sufferance of the Muslims, it would mean an eclipse of Hinduism and an eclipse of Islam. He was glad, therefore, he said, to have their assurance that their policy was not antagonism towards Islam. *He warned them that if the charge against them that their organisation was behind the killing of the Muslims was correct it would come to a bad end.* "In the course of questions and answers that followed Gandhiji was asked whether Hinduism did not permit the killing of evil-doers. If not, how did he explain the exhortation by Lord Krishna in the second chapter of the Gita to destroy the Kauravas?'
>
> "The reply to the first question, said Gandhiji, was both 'yes' and 'no'. One had to be an infallible judge as to who was the evil-door before the question of killing could arise. In other words one had to be completely faultless before such a right could accrue to one. How could a sinner claim the right to judge or execute another sinner ? As for the second question, granting that the right to punish the evil-doer was recognised by the Gita, it could be exercised by the properly constituted government only. Both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru will be rendered powerless if you become judge and executioner in one. They are tried

> servants of the nation. Give them a chance to serve you. Do not sabotage their efforts by taking the law into your own hands."*

Gandhi was steadfast on his principles, which was frustrating for the RSS, and too shrewd to be taken in by the glib talk of the RSS men. They may have included Gandhi in the Pratah-Smaran (their morning prayer) but it certainly is not because any change of attitude towards him has come about. This was done in 1965 and a few years later the RSS members in the Delhi Municipal Corporation objected to a resolution referring to Gandhi as 'Father of the Nation'.

If the RSS can demonstrate a change in its basic attitude the charge of Gandhi murder would get washed away. Otherwise it would stick, no matter what ritualistic cosmetics they employ. Such an opportunity was there in 1995-96 when a play based on Godse's explanation justifying the crime was sought to be staged. The Congress government in Maharashtra banned the play but the BJP government in neighbouring Gujarat allowed it. Later when the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance came to power in Maharashtra the play was revived in that state. There were protests against it. The RSS chief, Prof. Rajendra Singh alias Rajju Bhaiya commented that Godse was not wrong in opposing Gandhi, only his method was not correct.

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* *Ibid.*, pp. 440-41.

Chapter-XII

RSS, Nationalism and Communal Conflict

Mention the RSS in any group and immediately the talk would turn to communalism and communal riots. "Oh the RSS, they are criminals of the worst kind! They indulge in violence against innocent women and children in the name of religion. They do violence to the name of religion and commit outrage against humanity"some would say. Some others would protest, "Why do you accuse only the Hindus? Shouldn't they organise and retaliate when attacked?"

It is well-nigh impossible to think of, or discuss, the RSS without going into the question of its close association with the phenomenon of organised communal violence. Broadly speaking the Muslims of India have come to believe that the RSS is out to totally eliminate their community. There are a few people like the former Housing Minister Sikandar Bakht (later Minister for Industries in the BJP-led government in 1998-99) who try to defend them but the community finds such people totally at variance with the facts of life. They remain isolated individuals. The only organisation of Muslims that for some time made an attempt to whitewash the image of the RSS was the Jamaat-e-Islami, perhaps because it shared the RSS opposition to communism and secularism. But after what happened in Aligarh, Jamshedpur, Meerut (1987), Bombay (1992) and Surat (1992) and later in Ayodhya (1992) they are also constrained to change their tune. A section of Hindus--a small section only--feels that the RSS is their only saviour. The bulk of the community, however, either ignores them or curses them for bringing a bad name to Hindu religion and to India. The reason, of course, is very simple. The proportion of the Hindus in the total population is so large that they have no feelings of insecurity and, therefore, have no need of a saviour, RSS or any other.

Apart from the fact that popular mind associates the two together there is a remarkable coincidence that the RSS has grown the most in areas where there has been tension and violence. Wide notice has also been taken of another coincidence that most of the riots were preceded by visits of RSS leaders or the holding of the RSS camp in that particular area. The 1927 riot of Nagpur has already been referred to.* How it was seemingly unprovoked and deliberately engineered, how it had given a big boost to the growth of the RSS and how the first ever Officers Training Camp had been held only a few months prior to that. The same kind of reports were later heard from Ahmedabad, Jalgaon, Bhiwandi and Ranchi,

The Kapoor Commission, referred to in Chapter 4, had come by evidence indicating the involvement of the RSS in communal killings. The report notes: “By Ex. 119 dated October 7, 1947 the DSP, Poona, wrote that the RSS volunteers were responsible for Hindu-Muslim riots in certain rural areas of Poona District.”** Further on it is recorded: “Ex. 62 dated December 20, 1947 is a Bombay weekly letter showing that on December 10, 1947 a private meeting of Hindu Sabhaites including some Punjabi and Sikh refugees who were ex-army men could be utilised in training RSS volunteers. There could be, he said, no peace unless they had their revenge against Muslims.” B.B.S. Jetley’s evidence condensed in para 15.59 says that "he made a list of 600-700 cases against the RSS in a couple of months after independence, the charges against them being of collecting arms and attacking villages and assaulting individuals and his recommendation was that the RSS should be banned and he went and talked to the UP Premier Mr. G.B. Pant and the Home Minister Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri."*.

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* See Chapter III.

** See *Secular Democracy,* October 1970, p. 20.

All these were police reports and not used at the time of occurrence for any political purpose. The police and bureaucracy had not yet developed the habit of accepting the Congress as the effective boss, nor had most of the Congressmen till then started looking upon the RSS as an adversary. If at all, the evidence of the period, and admitted by responsible RSS men** as correct, shows that a large majority of Hindu officers were sympathetic to the organisation. The evidence, therefore, cannot be dismissed as concocted by a prejudiced regime.

What does the RSS say on this ? It does not deny its involvement and role but refuses to admit either that it has ever taken initiative or incited the Hindus against the Muslims. To retaliate and strike in self-defence, of course, is considered to be a social duty as the protection, preservation and rejuvenation of Hindu society is the sacred task it has taken upon itself. Quite often they give the impression as if they welcome the charge because they feel elated if the Hindus look upon them as the defenders of the faith and the Muslims feel terrorised. A Hindu Mahasabha functionary once made a grievance of it and told me: "Those who criticise the RSS for being anti-Muslim really help them because they can then pose themselves as heroes among the Hindus." The argument of the RSS runs along the following lines: 'We are not against anybody. We are for Hindus. To organise Hindus and serve them is no sin. The Muslims will come to their senses not by appeasement but by show of proven strength. Hindus have never been communal and aggressive. How can we be communal and aggressive ?' So goes on the obtuse reasoning.

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* *Op.cit.*, p. 21.

** One of them who later became an important MP told the author that around 1946-47 most of the secret reports of the government used to reach the RSS office even before they reached the minister concerned. He however prefers to remain anonymous.

An incident which occurred during the meeting of the National Integration Council held in June 1968 at Srinagar is very revealing in this context. Subhadra Joshi, the President of the All India Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee,* objected during her speech to the tendency of identifying communalism with any particular community and pointed out: "A communalist is a communalist not a Hindu or a Muslim or a Sikh just as a goonda is a goonda and not a representative of a community." There is nothing objectionable in this remark; in fact every reasonable person would agree with it. But Vajpayee flared up and threatened to walk out protesting that he had been called a goonda. Soon enough the realisation dawned upon him that he had inadvertently admitted to the charge of being a communalist and sat down quietly. Vajpayee had earlier made a statement that Hindus were not communal. He would have felt comfortable if there were a retort that Hindus were communal and Muslims were not.

The way the RSS presents the problem was also indicated when in May 1970, there was a debate in the Lok Sabha on the outburst of communal disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and other places. The whole nation had felt outraged by the happenings and almost all sections of public opinion pointed the accusing finger at the RSS and Jana Sangh. Atal Behari, initiating the debate tried to defend his parent organisation and the Jana Sangh and asserted: "Let us understand two things. Whatever the reason, our Muslim brothers have been becoming more and more communal and as a reaction thereto Hindus have been becoming more and more militant. No one has made Hindus militant. *If you insist on giving us the credit for this we are willing to take it".* *

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* An organisation which is working exclusively to expose and isolate the communal groups and organisations in public life. A non-official voluntary organisation, the AISVC has published a number of reports on communal violence and tracts exposing the RSS, Jamaat-e-Islami, Anand Marg, Muslim League and Akali Party. For the RSS this Committee is like a red rag to the bull.

If there is any ambiguity in what Vajpayee spoke in Parliament, the weekly *Organiser* removed it. In 1979 it carried an article 'Let Mohammad Go to the Mountain' wherein the author says: "The Muslim has a feeling that he has not been treated fairly in free India. But the Hindu has the profound feeling that he was ill-treated by the Muslim for a 'thousand years'."** In other words if the Hindu kills a Muslim or destroys Muslim property it is justifiable revenge. And the author was no stray or irresponsible individual; the sign 'M' for the author was known to be invariably used by the then editor who, obviously, represented the authentic voice of the organisation.

The solution of the problem, as suggested in the lines following is worth taking note of: "It is neither possible nor profitable to go into all the rights and wrongs of history. But there is such a thing as historic wrongs. Chou En-lai insisted on Japan saying 'sorry' for its invasion of China, before their relations could be normalised. I *wish the Muslim Indians said sorry by a symbolic gesture--by returning the historic mandirs forcibly made into mosques. In this connection I would particularly mention the Ram Janamsthan Mandir in Ayodhya and the Krishna Janamsthan Mandir in Mathura.* It could bring about a tremendous psychological change in the country."*** Comment is unnecessary.

In the speeches of Atal Behari Vajpayee referred to above it has been noticed that in his opinion Muslims alone were communal and they were responsible for provoking violence everywhere. What he said may not be borne out by facts but is an authentic expression of the RSS view. The founder of the RSS, for example, refrained from even using the expression 'Hindu-Muslim riot'; according to him they were only 'Muslim riots'.*

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* *Face the Facts* (the english rendering of Vajpayee's original Hindi speech made on May 19, 1970 published officially by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh), p. 12.

** *Organiser,* June 3, 1979, p. 7.

*** *Ibid.,* p. 7. Significantly the two places have been major issues used by the Sangh Pariwar to build a Hindu vote bank.

Golwalkar, who as Sar Sangh chalak was the most authoritative exponent of the mind of the RSS, identified the following causes of communal riots:

(a) the inability or unwillingness of Muslims to identify with India, its people and culture,

(b) the Muslims having forced the partition of India are justifiably the subject of suspicion by Hindus;

(c) the Muslims have extra-territorial loyalties.

The remedy suggested by him is simple: "Let Muslims look upon Rama as their hero and the communal problems will be all over."**

A very valid question would be: Is Golwalkar correct ? Will his way of thought and action bring about unity and integration ? Before we try to deal with these questions it is meet and proper that we try to find out what lies at the root of these attitudes which, on the face of it, appear perverse and absurd. And that would lead us to their concept of nationalism.

It has already been pointed out that the RSS was founded by rejecting the concept of nationalism that prevailed at that time. "In those days", says the biographer of its founder, "the idea of territorial nationalism held sway in the country. Even well educated workers had developed a strong feeling that all those who live within the geographical boundaries of this country, whatever their sentiments, constitute the nation."*** This was considered slavish mentality, a kind of self-forgetfulness on the part of Hindus. Hedgewar took upon himself the task of liberating Hindu society of this demoralised, degenerate state and organise it to assert as exclusively constituting the nation. In a game played in the RSS shakhas almost daily the group raises the slogan; *'Hindusthan Hindu ka, Nahin kisi ke Baap ka* (India belongs to Hindus and to nobody's father). The RSS had resolved to make an aggressive assertion of this idea.

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* C P. Bhishikar, *op. cit.*, p.

** *Organiser,* June 20, 1971.

*** Bhishikar, *op. cit.*. p. 30

The first most comprehensive statement of this novel idea was made in 1938 in the book *We or Our Nationhood Defined.* It is immaterial for the purpose of understanding the RSS mind whether it was an original work or plagiarised; what matters is that it has been treated as the ideological manifesto of the movement. The very title of the book proclaims that the definition of nationhood propounded within the covers would make a distinction between 'we' and 'they'. Obviously 'we' did not include all the inhabitants of this land; the non-Hindus were outside the pale. Golwalkar called it cultural nationalism as against territorial nationalism prevalent in those days. (The expression is made central to the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party. In the White Paper published by the party on Ayodhya's Babri Masjid, the demolition of the four hundred year old shrine was described as an assertion of 'cultural nationalism'.)

The book has so many laudatory references to Hitler and his theory of racial superiority that it had become embarrassing for the organisation to continue its publication. It has been withdrawn from circulation and hence it is no use discussing its contents. It is enough to recall just two excerpts which have assumed further importance in the response of the Sangh Pariwar to Sonia Gandhi's active role in politics. First is an exhortation to emulate the race theory of Hitler: "German race pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic race--the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by."*

And what is the lesson he wants us to learn: "From this standpoint sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the non-Hindu peoples in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age-long traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizens' rights."*

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* Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined,* p. 27.

The race motif was brought to fore in 1999 when the BJP questioned the right of Italy-born Sonia Gandhi to hold the highest executive position in the country. She would pass all the tests prescribed by Golwalkar for citizenship but for two sins, one of being a Christian and the other for having been born in Italy.

Besides inconvenient references to Hitler the withdrawal of *We* from circulation might also have been prompted by the crudity of presentation. There was hardly anything in it that could be called cultural. It has, therefore, been replaced by the *Bunch of Thoughts* in which an attempt has been made to clothe the concept of nationhood in a religio-cultural garb; stray quotations from scriptures are sprinkled to give it a new flavour. The attempt has not been too eminently successful because it is no better than the discourse of a pedlar of quack-medicines who also tries to quote scriptures and use literary or folk allusions to boost the sales. When we come to the concept itself the old idea is repeated, nation is again identified with Hindu society:

> "If we apply this definition acknowledged by all the learned men in the world to our own country, we find that this great country of ours extending in the north from the Himalayas--with all its branches spreading north, south, east and west, and with the territories included in those great branches--right up to the southern ocean inclusive of all the islands, is one great natural unit. As the child of this

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* Golwalkar, *op.cit,,* p. 52.

> soil, our well-evolved society has been living here for thousands of years. This society has been known, especially in modern times, as the Hindu Society. This also is a historical fact. For it is the forefathers of the Hindu people who have set up standards and traditions of love and devotion for the motherland. They also prescribed various duties and rites with a view to keep aglow in the people's mind for all time to come, a living and complete picture of our motherland and devotion to it as a Divine Entity. And again it is they who shed their blood in defence of the sanctity and integrity of the motherland. That all this has been done only by the Hindu people is a fact to which our history of thousands of years bears eloquent testimony. It means that only ~~the~~ Hindu has been living here as the child of this soil. All our great personalities right from hoary ages down to modern times have, by their life and example, only confirmed the continuity of this sacred bond."*

The only improvement on *We* is that religious fervour has been accentuated and the crude demands on non-Hindus have been omitted.

This ideology runs counter to the Indian concept of composite nationalism which recognises that all religious communities have contributed to the development and growth of the society. Enshrined in the Constitution, this concept grants equal rights to all irrespective of religious creed and provides protection to minority cultures and languages. The concept given by Golwalkar does not rest content with asserting the Hindu ethos or flavour. It positively excludes non-Hindus. After making the statement he anticipates questions: What about the Muslims and the Christians dwelling in this land ? Are they not also born and bred here? How could they become aliens just because they have changed their faith ?

Before answering these questions he poses one himself: What is the attitude of those people who have been converted to Islam or Christianity ? His answer is: "They are born in this land, no doubt.

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* Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 123-24.

But are they true to its salt? Are they grateful towards this land which has brought them up ? Do they feel that they are the children of this land, its traditions and that to serve it is their great good fortune ? Do they feel it a duty to serve it? *No. Together with the change in their faith, gone are spirit of love and devotion for the nation."**

And then he moves a step further and calls in question the very loyalty of non-Hindus and holds them guilty of treason. He adds:

> "The story does not end here. They have also developed a feeling of identification with the enemies of this land. They look to some foreign lands as their holy places. They call themselves 'Sheikhs' and 'Syeds'. Sheikhs and Syeds are certain clans in Arabia.** How then did these people come to feel that they were their descendants? That is because they have cut off all their ancestral national moorings of this land and mentally merged themselves with the aggressors. They still think that they have come here to conquer and to establish their kingdoms. So we see that it is not merely a case of change of faith, but a change even in national identity. What else is it if not treason, to join the camp of the enemy leaving their mother nation in the lurch."***

From this it is quite clear that unless non-Hindus embrace Hinduism, they will get no rights, what to speak of respect, from Golwalkar and his followers. That is why Golwalkar raised objection when Abdul Hamid and Keelor Brothers were honoured for their supreme patriotism and gallantry during the Indo-Pak conflict.****

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* *Ibid,,* pp. 127-28.

** This only betrays Golwalkar's ignorance. Neither Sheikh nor Syed is a clan of Arabia. They are two Arabic words signifying chieftain and leader respectively.

*** *Ibid,,* p. 128.

*****Swatantra Bharat,* Lucknow, December 24, 1965.

This concept of nationalism is informed through and through with the hatred of minority communities, Muslims in particular. The RSS has been hammering the idea that Pakistan was created as homeland for Muslims and every Muslim residing today in India should have migrated to the newly created state. According to the Sangh all the Muslims who have opted to stay behind owe their loyalty to Pakistan and are enemies of the homeland. In their opinion "wherever there is a masjid or a Muslim Mohalla the Muslims feel that it is their own independent territory", and in the words of Golwalkar they are, therefore, "so many miniature Pakistans".*

The distrust against thc Muslims that the RSS people generate amongst the Hindus goes to the extent of uttering blatant lies. Golwalkar reportedly declared after the Indo-Pak conflict of 1965: "At some places the Muslims were heard repenting why during Pakistan's attack they did not disturb the internal peace to help their Muslim brothers in Pakistan."** The *Organiser* tried to belittle the office of the President of India just because it was held by a Muslim. It reported, "All that Hindu wants is that our culture should flower forth into greatness. He is scandalised that after installing one Muslim as President and another as Chief Justice, he is told that he is not giving jobs to the Muslims." In the same article it is further said,

> "Muslims must accept the fact that India is as much a Hindu country as Pakistan is a Muslim country or Britain is a Christian country. Anybody who does not accept this way of life is an ostrich today...... and he will be dead as dodo tomorrow."***

This anti-Muslim attitude of the RSS goes to the extent of dubbing even Urdu language as a foreign language. Historically, the birth place of Urdu is India and the largest number of Urdu speaking people are found in this country. In an article entitled

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* Golwalkar, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

** *Swatantra Bharat*, December 24, 1965.

*** *Organiser*, January 4, 1970.

"Let not another Pak be in the name of Urdu" published in the *Organiser*, it is stated,

> "The import and significance of the word 'Urdu' is so derogatory to national self-respect that it suppresses all emotional upsurge in favour of the language. How and why should we own a language the very name of which constantly reminds us of our political subjugation..... Hindu ancestors passed on Sanskrit and Hindi to their descendants. They had nothing to do with the transmission of Urdu."*

One erstwhile swayamsewak of the RSS speaks from personal experience about the anti-Muslim attitude and the culture fostered in the shakha: "If the Hindu boys were involved in a quarrel or tiff of some kind, we were supposed to mediate and bring about a peaceable settlement. If, on the contrary, a Hindu boy was embroiled in a dispute with a Muslim boy we were not to bother as to who was in the wrong. We were straightway to side with the Hindu boy and, if it came to a physical show-down, not to avoid or shrink from doing our 'mite'. The Muslim was the enemy who was to be shown no quarters whatsoever. The question that he could be in the right or be the aggrieved party was irrelevant, for everything was to be subsumed in the overall question of serving Mother India which meant serving the Hindus. Muslims were by definition the enemies of the Hindus. They were poisonous toads and would it be part of discretion to treat the offspring of the toads, however innocuous or innocent in its appearance, as anything but toads or snakes? These young Muslim boys were like the offspring of snakes, who would sting when they were able to. We learnt all this mythological lore about the Muslims in the *bodhak* sessions (I hope I remember the word correctly)-i.e., the sessions of intellectual understanding."**

After all this Balasaheb Deoras, the former RSS chief, had the courage to say that in their view all religions were equal and that the RSS was not opposed to secularism. His courage has to be admired but definitions of communalism and secularism will have to be altered to accommodate the deeds of his organisation. A more honest statement of the position can be found in the *Organiser* article by 'M' referred to above:

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* *Organiser*, February 2, 1962.

** Ram Lall Dhooria, *I was a Swayamsewak*, pp. 20-21.

"The Muslim often feels that India is not true to its pledge of 'secularism'. I think he is right--in a way. We are not, and cannot be secular in the sense that Hinduism and Hindu culture on the one side and Islam and Muslim culture on the other, will be on par in India. Our predominant culture is Hindu--and not even communists can wish it away.

"We are secular only in the sense that we don't have any official theology. And that is so only because we have as many theologies as we have religious sects. So the Hindu is secular because of the nature of Hinduism, and not out of any special consideration for non-Hindus. While politicians may play with the words 'communal' and 'secular' to their heart's content, fact is that the predominant culture of a country will be its basic national culture. It will be Islamic (based on river Indus) in Pakistan; it will be Hindu in India. Politics cannot change the basic life of the mass of people."*

The Muslim is frankly told: "The Muslim reader must be wondering why I'm asking mostly him to do this, that and the other. There is reason for that. Mohammed (Peace be on him) one day announced that the yonder mountain will come to him the following day. When it did not, he quietly said: 'If the mountain does not come to Mohammed, then Mohammed will go to the mountain.' In the Indian situation, the Hindu is the mountain, and the Muslim population, the Mohammed. I need not elaborate."**

This hatred is not confined to Muslims alone but extends beyond them to Jains and Christians. The RSS believes that Christians do not look upon India as their homeland and the attitude of every convert to Christianity suddenly turns anti-national.

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* *Organiser,* June 3, 1979.

** *Ibid.*

That means unless they are reconverted they have no right in this land because they would remain anti-national. Golwalkar was critical even of our Constitution for having prescribed equality for all irrespective of religious differences. In "*Why Hindu Rashtra*?" he wrote: "Unfortunately in our country, our Constitution has equated the children of the soil with the aggressor and given equal rights to everybody, just as a person without understanding may give equal rights to his children and to the thieves in his house and distribute the property among all. That has happened in our country now. Same rights to the aggressor, same rights to the children the soil!"

In the same book he gave the verdict: Historically this land is a Hindu Rashtra, which has been existing here from very ancient times. Freedom of the land of Bharat is the freedom of Hindu Rashtra. *Prosperity of Bharat means establishment of the Hindu Rashtra in the world as a respectable entity*.

While the ire is directed mainly towards Muslims, Christians fare no better. Fewer epithets area devoted to them only because they are numerically a smaller community. Otherwise their guilt is no less. They are accused of whipping up trouble in Nagaland and other tribal areas. Of their role in India, the saviour of Hinduism says, "Such is the role of Christian gentlemen residing in our land today, out to demolish not only the religion and social fabric of our life but also to establish political domination in various pockets and if possible all over the land. Such has been, in fact, their role wherever they have stepped— all under the alluring garb of bringing peace and brotherhood to mankind under the angelic wings of Jesus Christ."

And hence the warning: "So long as the Christians here indulge in such activities and consider themselves as agents of the international movement for the spread of Christianity, and refuse to offer their first loyalty to the land of their birth and behave as true children of the heritage and culture of their ancestors, they will remain here as hostiles and will have to be treated as such."

Sowing suspicions and prejudices is a part of fostering the peculiar RSS culture of hatred in the Hindu society at large. That is the only way to build up what is called a Hindu backlash, a frenzy against those adhering to faiths not considered reliable by the RSS in its pursuit of power. Numerically too small to justify the threat perception to cause alarm to the majority community the target was the Muslim community which was spread all over the country. But, as the views cited above show, they were not alone. The issue was being built up in tribal areas where the Christian populations were sizeable because at a time when those were neglected by others the Christian missionaries brought means of health and education.

It was brought to the fore when Sonia Gandhi, a Christian and Italian born, came to head the party which posed the most potent threat to the BJP, the surrogate of the RSS in its pursuit of power. At a time when elegies, epitaphs and requiems were being written for the Congress Party and the Sangh Pariwar was smacking its lips to swallow many chunks of its body Sonia had audaciously taken up reins of the almost dead horse and put it on its feet. She must be stopped in her tracks.

As part of this strategy the reconversion programme launched by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad was invigorated and anti-Christian violence was provoked in almost all the tribal areas. In Gujarat viciously provocative leaflets were distributed and anti-Christian processions brought out.* This was followed by attacks on Christian houses, churches and schools. All through a demagogic stance was maintained. A typical example of that is the speech of Dattopant Thengadi the chief of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. Speaking at a function organised by the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram in Calcutta he said, "We are not against Christianity but we oppose the anti-national activities of Christian missionaries who indulge in unethical proselytization".**

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* See Appendix VII.

** Reported in the weekly *Organiser* of January 31, 1999

Chapter-XIII

Role in Communal Violence

Is the RSS concept and attitude to nationalism conducive to promotion of communal harmony? The question needs to be coolly contemplated. The complaint of the RSS is that the charge of communalism against them is politically motivated and that not a single commission of inquiry has held the RSS guilty. The defence given by them in their official publications is based on two facts. One is a government document *'Brief description of the major communal incidents in the country during the year 1968, and first quarter of the year 1969'*. It briefly describes 23 incidents and does not name the RSS. The other basis is the answers to two Parliament questions. The first one was put by Jagannath Rao Joshi and Narendra Singh. It read: "Whether Govt. are aware of such cases wherein courts of law have decided that the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh has been responsible for acts of violence state-wise and if so. the facts thereof." An identical question was put by Dattopant Thengadi, Lal K. Advani, Dr. Ram Kripal Sinha and Jagdish Mathur in Rajya Sabha. The answer in both the cases was negative.

Neither of these can be construed as a clearance by any commission of inquiry. They are bare statements of fact not going into cause-and-effect analysis in political-sociological terms which alone could confirm or deny the involvement of a group or party.

The only such report that they cite in their defence is that of the Raghubar Dayal Commission which on page 55, para 1.15 states: "An allegation has been made that the incidents at Hatia were organised and planned by the members of the RSS and Jana Sangh. There is no evidence about any such general organised attacks by the members of these bodies forthcoming though allegations had been made of private meetings at certain places or the houses of certain persons said to be associated with RSS and Jana Sangh. Even if it is true, private meetings at certain places would not suffice to establish the allegations against these organisations."

But the RSS defenders and propagandists are once again guilty of *suggestio falsi, suppressio veri* because they prefer to ignore some other more comprehensive reports--Madon Commission, Jaganmohan Reddy Commission and the Vythayathil Commission.

The RSS may be greatly benefited if they carefully read Chapter 6 of the report by Justice Madon where he gives an anatomy of communal disturbances. The following lines deserve special consideration:

> "Communal tension does not spring up over-night. It is built up over a period of time, suckled on communal propaganda, nursed on communal incidents and fed on rumours, until men's hearts are filled with hatred and their thoughts turn to violence."*

He gives a list of 27 common themes of communal propaganda viz.,**

> "(1) the decrying of the religion, customs and traditions of the other community;

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* D.P. Madon, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad. Vol 1, Part* 11, pp. 60-61.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

(2) the charge that Muslims, with a few exceptions, are anti-national and harbour extra-territorial loyalty to Pakistan;

(3) the appeasement of the Muslims by the Congress government with a view to secure their votes by upholding their so-called unreasonable demands in detraction of the rights of the Hindus;

(4) the atrocities committed by the Muslims at the time of the partition of India;

(5) the atrocities committed by Pakistan against Hindus residing in that country;

(6) the destruction and desecration of Hindu temples and idols of Hindu gods by Muslim rulers in the past;

(7) the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam by Muslim rulers;

(8) the claim that had Shivaji not lived, all Hindus in India would have been forcibly converted to Islam;

(9) an exhortation to the Muslims that as they were all converted to Islam from Hinduism, they should return to the Hindu fold;

(10) the charge that the Muslims alone are responsible for all communal disturbances which have taken place in the country;

(11) the charge that a Muslim has publicly slaughtered a cow;

(12) the charge that a Muslim has descerated or offered insult to a Hindu temple or the idol of a Hindu god;

(13) the charge that a Muslim has kidnapped or raped a Hindu girl or outraged her modesty;

(14) advocating the sending away of all Muslims to Pakistan;

(15) a claim that India is the land of the Hindus only;

(16) advocating the Indianization of Muslims, by which is really intended the Hinduization of Muslims:

(17) an exhortation to the Hindus to unite and stand up to and fight the Muslim menace;

(18) the charge that some Muslim or Muslims have shouted pro-Pakistani slogans;

(19) applauding and praising for their valour and courage the Hindus of a town or city where communal disturbances had broken out and in which the Muslims had suffered more;

(29) the charge that the Hindu majority is out to crush the Muslim minority and to wipe out its religion, language and culture;

(21) the charge that the Muslims being in minority can get no justice or fair play in India;

(22) the charge that since the Hindus are in a majority, all governments in India are Hindu governments and will not protect the Muslim minority against the oppression of the Hindus;

(23) the charge that the Muslims, being in a minority, are discriminated against in service, employment and other matters;

(24) the charge that the grievances and complaints of the Muslims are not heeded by the administration or the police of which the majority consists of Hindus;

(25) the charge that the Muslims are being persecuted in India;

(26) the charge that a Muslim cannot get any redress in India; and

(27) an exhortation to the Muslims that as the government and the police will not protect them, they should unite and fight the Hindus in self-defence and that the best form of defence is attack."

The analysis cannot be called one-sided. Let us therefore take up some specific instances. First the **Raghubar Dayal Commission** report. It says: "On August 12, the Jana Sangh organised a procession and a meeting at Ranchi. It distributed a hand-bill in this connection The contents of the hand-bill referred to the undesirability of making Urdu the second official language of the state and made it clear that the opposition was to Urdu being made the second state language and not to the taking of such steps as might be considered necessary for encouraging the study of Urdu in the state. It was said that participation in the procession and the meeting would save the country from further partition and from going into the claws of Pakistan; that the question of language which had led to the partition twenty years ago had been raised by some Pakistani and anti-national forces."

That the whole propaganda was started by the RSS became clear when immediately thereafter the RSS chief Golwalkar speaking in Ramlila Ground of Delhi declared:

> "The Indian Muslims are trying to organise themselves around the slogan of Urdu. Any status or recognition to Urdu would help the process of this separatist Muslim organisation which would result in another partition of the country."

Does this identity of views between the rioters of Ranchi and the RSS chief indicate anything ?

One does not know how the RSS would relish the fact that the **Vythayathil Commission** appreciated a pamphlet of Subhadra Joshi analysing whether the RSS had a hand in communal violence. He has particularly commended for analysis of the RSS methodology and propaganda which reads as follows:

> "This methodology and propaganda for organising riots can be analysed into the following aspects:
>
> (a) Rousing communal feeling in the majority community by the propaganda that the Muslims are disloyal to the nation.
>
> (b) Deepening the fear in majority and playing upon that fear complex.
>
> (c) Infiltrating into administration and inducing the members of the civil, police and army services into adopting communal attitude.
>
> (d) Training young people of the majority community in the use of such weapons as dagger, sword and spear.

(e) Spreading rumours to widen the communal cleavage and giving to any incident or movement a communal colour."

A review of the riots that have occurred in free India would show that this technique has always been at play. Training camps of the RSS are held every six months. The administration and the machinery of law and order have been affected. Anti-Muslim propaganda is carried on relentlessly.

Some other findings of Justice Vythayathil in his report are pertinent:

i. "I have no doubt that the Jana Sangh has contributed in large measure to the creation of communal tension in Tellicherry which led to the disturbances."

ii. "There can be no doubt that the RSS is a blatant communal organisation."

iii. "P8W1 (P. Rajagopal, RSS chief worker in Cannanore District) admits that the Sangh has its branch at Thiruvangod in Tellicherry town. I have no doubt that the RSS had taken an active part in rousing anti-Muslim feeling among the Hindus of Tellicherry and preparing the background for disturbances."*

Mr. Justice Jaganmohan Reddy who inquired into riots in Ahmedabad and other Gujarat towns has also made significant observations:

1. "We cannot, therefore, accept the police case that the course of riots do not show that they were organised or directed. There must have been some agency or agencies which must have exploited the Jagannath temple incident. We have already noticed according to the special report of the Ramayan incident, the agitation had received the blessings of the local Bharatiya Jana Sangh workers who did not want to involve themselves directly but suggested the formation of an organisation known as Hindu Dharma

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* Extracts from Report quoted in the *Secular Democracy,* January 1974, pp. 24-25.

> Raksha Samiti with Harishchandra Panchal, an old RSS worker, as governor. The evidence of the police and the report of the Commissioner further disclosed that two persons, viz. Balkrishna and Sevakram Thakkar had resorted to indefinite fast outside Kagdapith police station and that during the fasting Bharatiya Jana Sangh workers and some others viz. SSP corporator and a Hindu Mahasabha member had visited them and were present throughout in sympathy with the hunger-strike."
>
> 2. "This evidence as a whole indicates that the police had reason to believe that some local Jana Sangh leaders and workers were actively participating in the riots though these officers in their affidavits had not given any such indication and in cross-examination attempts were made to prevaricate and plead ignorance of such participation."
>
> 3. "Another noticeable feature to which we must make a reference is the definite part played, in various districts which were affected, by the workers of the local Jana Sangh and Hindu Mahasabha organisations or by persons having leanings towards them. There is evidence definitely that they took a leading part in the districts of Amreli, Banaskantha, Mehsana and Baroda. In one of these instances, there is evidence to show that they were inciting the crowds to riot."*

Sometimes it is said that there is no direct evidence of the involvement of Sangh in communal riots. There are three main reasons for this confusion:

(a) The RSS keeps no register of membership and therefore there is no way of establishing whether a particular individual is connected with the organisation or not. The RSS people are trained to tell a lie whenever required.

(b) The RSS operates not in its own name but under the cover of front organisations some of them created locally for a specific purpose. For example in Ahmedabad they worked in the name of the Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti. In Bhiwandi (Maharashtra) it was Rashtriya Utsav Mandal (RUM) and in Jalgaon, the Shree Ram Tarun Mandal.

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* See *Secular Democracy,* January 1974.

(c) No organisation, however communal, would pass a resolution about creating communal tension or send circulars to its members to indulge in communal violence. The participation of individual members spread over in different areas should be considered sufficient proof unless there are sufficient reasons to believe that those members have been disowned, repudiated and punished at appropriate time and that has never been done by the RSS.

The complicity and *modus operandi* of the RSS and its political front, the Jana Sangh (and now BJP), becomes absolutely clear from the findings of **Justice Madon** about the riots in Bhiwandi and Jalgaon. We quote below the findings about the riots in Bhiwandi:

> "Under the second part of clause (c) of the Terms of Reference the Commission has to inquire into and report on whether there is any organisation or group within the limits of the Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Council and in the revenue villages of Khoni and Nagaon or outside the said places which has directly and indirectly provoked the Bhiwandi disturbances. The organization which has both directly and indirectly provoked the disturbances which took place in Bhiwandi, Khoni, and Nagaon on May 7, 1970 and thereafter is the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal the majority of the members of which belonged to the Jan Sangh or were pro- Jana Sangh and the rest, apart from a few exceptions, belonged to the Shiv Sena."*

Giving summary of facts and conclusions in Vol. VI of the Report the Commission has made observations which make the responsibility clear and specific:

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* *Ibid., Vol.* III, p. 310.

- "The behaviour of a section of Hindu processionists, particularly the RSS and the PSP sections, was calculated to provoke and humiliate the Muslims. Provocative and anti-Muslim slogans were shouted and 'gulal' was thrown in such excess that it annoyed even the police officers and policemen present there."
- "The younger Hindu elements, most of whom were either members of the Jana Sangh or were pro-Jana Sangh, not only insisted in the meeting of the Peace Committee and the Shiv Jayanti Utsav Samiti that the procession should go past the Nizampura Jumma Mosque but also emphatically demanded that there should be no restrictions whatever on the throwing of 'gulal' or the shouting of slogans."
- "The Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh was established on October 21, 1964 and in October 1967 Dr. Bhagwan Prabhashankar Vyas (J.S.W.I) was elected the President of the said Bhiwandi Branch and thereafter continued to be elected to that office year after year. Dr. Vyas and a number of other local Jana Sangh leaders have played an important part in the communal history of Bhiwandi. This they did, not by carrying on their communal activities through the Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh but through an organisation formed by them in May 1969, namely, the RUM."
- "The RUM was formed on May 23, 1969 by Dr. B.P. Vyas, the President of the Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh, and a group of nineteen Hindus who had walked out of the Shiv Jayanti Utsav Samiti meeting on April 6, 1959 and had subsequently tendered their resignation from it in protest against the imposition of any restrictions on the Shiv Jayanti procession. Out of these nineteen persons, fifteen belonged to the Jana Sangh or were pro-Jana Sangh, one belonged to the Shiv Sena and the remaining three did not belong to any particular party at that time. Right from its inception the RUM followed a

communal line. It held weekly prayer meetings and public meetings in which communal speeches were made and political leaders from outside Bhiwandi and others who were well-known for making communal speeches were invited to be guest speakers. This way it gained a great hold over a certain section of the Hindus in Bhiwandi and within a few months the tempo and intensity of its activities increased and spread out into the villages round about Bhiwandi and a branch of the RUM was formed at Padgha. The RUM has played a leading role in the communal history of Bhiwandi and was responsible for bringing the communal tension in Bhiwandi to a pitch."

- "Another incident of 1968 which led to communal tension was the holding of the Jana Sangh District Convention in Bhiwandi on March 10, 1968 which coincided with Bakra-Id.

"The evidence does not leave any doubt that the day of Bakra-Id was deliberately selected in order to make this District Convention of the Jana Sangh synchronize with the celebrations of Bakra-Id."

- "The real aims of the RUM as apparent from its activities, the utterances of its leaders and of those whom it invited to speak at the public meetings organised by it and to whom it made its platform available, were very different. The activities of the RUM were communally motivated right from the beginning. The majority of its leaders consisted of hot-headed Hindu youngsters imbued with communalism, and, as the evidence shows, the guiding spirit of the RUM was Dr. Vyas, the President of the Bhiwandi Branch of the Jana Sangh, or were pro-Jana Sangh and the rest, with a few exceptions belonged to the Shiv Sena. The RUM was so completely Jana Sangh dominated that in the beginning of September 1969, Dattatray Mahadeo More, Baliram More's brother, who was vice-president of the RUM and who at that time did not belong to any political party, and Suresh Kandalkar, a

Shiv Sena worker who was the Secretary of the RUM, resigned from their respective offices on this ground. In all matters likely to create communal tension the RUM adopted a militant and aggressive attitude and set itself up as the champion of what it considered to be the rights of the Hindus against the Muslims and so to say, to teach the Muslims their place and if they were not willing to learn their place, to teach them a lesson. It even went out of its way to create such occasions. The speeches made by the RUM leaders and its guest speakers at public meetings organised by the RUM leave no doubt what its intentions were."

- "The evidence shows that the attitude and the behaviour of the RUM leaders and some other Hindu leaders, including Baliram More, were such as to encourage the processionists in their misbehaviour. For instance, Narayan Badlapurkar, the Vice-President of the RUM, was the leader of the group from Sutar Ali which shouted vociferously and lingered near the Saudagar Mohalla Jamma Mosque until warned and pushed ahead by DSP Diwate. Dr. Vyas was in the midst of the group which was shouting 'Jana Sangh Zindabad', 'Dr. Vyas Zindabad', 'Shiv Sena Zindabad' and 'Baliram More Zindabad'. In Bhusar Mohalla Baliram More was standing next to a group of processionists from Thange Ali (which was part of his Municipal constituency) who were squatting on the road and shouting objectionable slogans and paying no heed to Inspector Pradhan. This group was from the central part of the procession which was the rowdiest."

"The processionists were concerned, at the instance and instigation of the RUM. A majority of the processionists had participated in the Shiv Jayanti procession carrying lathis to which Bhagwa Flags and banners were tied in order to circumvent the ban under section 37(1) of the Bombay Police Act, 1951, prohibiting the carrying of weapons, so that the processionists would be armed to meet the contingency of the Muslims starting any trouble either on their own or as a result of the deliberate provoking of the Muslims by the processionists. There were thus prior preparations for the disturbances by the processionists."

"The organisation responsible for bringing the communal tension in Bhiwandi to a pitch is the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal. The majority of the leaders and workers of the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal belonged to the Jana Sangh or were pro-Jana Sangh and the rest, apart from a few exceptions, belonged to the Shiv Sena."

On Jalgaon the Commission says:

"An organisation which played a prominent part in the communal history of Jalgaon was the Shree Ram Tarun Mandal (the RTM). It was a successor to another organization with a similar object called the 'Ram Zunzar' established in 1965 by P.K. Zare when he was the Secretary of the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh. The RTM was formed in 1966 or 1967. When Zare was the Secretary of the RTM he either belonged to the Jana Sangh or was pro-Jana Sangh. There was close identity of interests and objects between the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh and the RTM, and when the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh commenced displaying boards of a communal nature and against municipal administration the RTM followed suit. The RTM was established, controlled and managed by the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh and the Jalgaon District Jana Sangh and followed their policies. It was in reality merely an organisation to carry out the politics of the Jalgaon City Jana Sangh and the Jalgaon District Jana Sangh under a different label."

"The communal harmony and amity which prevailed in Jalgaon was shattered by the Jana Sangh on October 1, 1970."

"The organizations which have fomented communal tension in Bhiwandi are:

> 1. The Jalgaon City Branch of the Jana Sangh, and
> 2. the Shree Ram Tarun Mandal which was completely controlled and managed by the Jalgaon City Branch of the Jana Sangh and the Jalgaon District Branch of the Jana Sangh.
>
> There is no evidence that any organization or group outside Jalgaon has fomented communal tension in Jalgaon."

It has been noticed that wherever communal riots have occurred the political gain has invariably accrued to the RSS sponsored political organisations, BJS and BJP. Several politicians, even victims of these incidents, sometimes felt that it was only a political tactic to gain political power and that, once they capture seats of power they would try to establish social stability. After all no responsible politician or party would like the country to be in a state of perpetual conflict. But that very reasonable argument got refuted after the BJP came to power although it demagogically tried to propagate that the regions under their administration remained free from communal violence.

Gujarat under BJP proved that the leopard cannot, and does not, change its spots. And it happened most blatantly during the period that the government in the Centre was also controlled by the BJP. No minority was spared, neither Muslims nor Christians. The latter had to face the worst situation in the entire history of free India when, at the entrances of villages, hoardings came up proclaiming *"Vishwa Hindu Parishad welcomes you to Hindu Rashtra village"*. A fact finding team that toured Gujarat found that such hoardings had been put up in 1200 villages and at 350 places in the cities.

Bardoli town, which had made Vallabhbhai Patel the Sardar after the famous Kisan satyagraha of yore, now got in the news for serious communal clashes in which Muslims were victims. The reason was marriage between a Muslim boy, Hanif with a Hindu girl, Varsha. The marriage was treated by VHP and Bajrang Dal etc., as Hanif's, and therefore a Muslim conspiracy to entice the Hindu girl into elopement and marriage.

Gujarat Muslims had been on the hit list of these organisations for nearly three decades, since 1969. The new addition to the list was the Christian community whose work in the field of education was treated as a conspiracy for conversion. Of more than three dozen incidents a few sample would be enough to gauge the position.

- The most startling incident was the 103-year old Christian missionary institution, the I.P. Girls Senior Secondary School. Here is the eye-witness account given by two Hindu students. Joshi Nehal of Class 12 said: "Our class was in progress on June 20. Suddenly, at quarter past eight, the school bell rang. We were alarmed since this was not the specified time for the bell. Our teacher asked us to stay in the class and bolt the door from inside. There was some commotion outside. She went down to the principal's office. Then we heard loud slogans, '*Jai Shri Ram*'. One of us opened the door and we saw around 25 people approaching us. They told us to vacate the room and go home. They said, 'Tell your parents that they should pull you out of the school. This school is forcing you to adopt Christianity. They will force you to marry Christians. Go back.' When we refused, they threatened to burn us alive. They shattered the windows of our class-room. Some of us fainted. We were so scared."

Nehal's classmate, also a Hindu, Zala Aruna, continued the narration: "They snatched the Bibles from the primary kids and stepped on the books. They danced on them, shouting, *Jai Shri Ram*'. Then they sprinkled kerosene and put the books on fire. I just couldn't believe it. If it had been the Geeta, would they have done the same thing?"

- The following is report of another similar incident, at Zankhvav village in Surat district: The Shantiniketan High School, run by the Jesuit priests of the Loyola Education Trust, was broken into and stoned. A tractor was driven into the premises and the playground for children was ploughed. Damaged to the tune of Rs. 15,000 was caused. The land in question was the property of the late Shantilal Shah who had handed it over to the Loyola

Education Trust to build a school in 1984. The Fathers have been running the school which caters to the tribal students of neighbouring villages and residents of Zankhvav town. Out of the 720 students enrolled, 152 are Christians and he rest belong to other religions.

> "The *Gujarat Samachar* and the *Sandesh* dailies had been systematically printing inflammatory and vicious articles in Gujarati, claiming that the priests were forcibly converting tribals to Christianity and that only Christian children were admitted into the school. Two truck-loads of hooligans from the nearby Wadi village were let loose in Zankhvav market the next day. In the ensuing violence, the parents of three students were arrested. Rather than take punitive measures against the evil-doers, the Gujarat state government (BJP), seems to be a tacit endorser of the destructive activities."

- The responsibility of all the incidents was squarely put on the Sangh Pariwar in an interview by Gujarat's Director General of Police, C.P. Singh. In reply to a question he said:

> "It is individuals not organisations that can be arrested and nailed. But one thing was clear in the pattern of incidents. It was the activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal who were taking law into their own hands which posed a serious danger to peace in Gujarat.
>
> "Many of the attacks on the minorities were after these organisations had whipped up local passions on mere allegations of conversion (by Christian missionaries) and allegedly forced inter-religious marriages, where again conversion was supposed to be the alleged motive."

About the result of the police investigation he said:

> "Our investigations revealed that in most cases these were entirely baseless allegations. A lot of hue and cray was raised about forced marriages but most of the incidents highlighted by the media were found incorrect. Take, for instance, the incidents at Randhikpur town in Panchmahal

> district where two women were allegedly kidnapped by Muslim youths and terror unleashed on Muslims of the village by the VHP and Bajrang Dal workers. Investigations have revealed that the women had eloped with these youths of their own volition and one of them had already married her lover.
>
> "Incidents cases of forcible marriages were reported by the media in early years too. Then, too, investigations showed the reports to be baseless."

Further corroboration, if at all it be required, is available in the language of the leaflets in Appendix-VII.

APPENDICES

till
Eng

Appendix - I

RSS PRAYER

प्रार्थना

नमो मातृभूमि जिथे जन्म लाभी।
नमो आर्यभूमि जिथे वाढ़लों मी।।
नमो धर्मभूमि जिथेच्यांच कामी।
पड़ो देह माझा सदा ती नमामी।।

हे गुरु श्री राम दूता शील हमको दीजिए।
शीघ्र सारे सद्गुणों से पूर्ण हिन्दू कीजिए।।
लीजिए हमको शरण में रामपंथी हम बनें।
ब्रह्मचारी धर्मरक्षक वीर व्रतधारी बनें।।

राष्ट्र गुरु श्री समर्थ रामदास की जय।
भारत माता की जय।।

The Hindi-Marathi Prayer which was sung in the RSS shakhas till 1939 when the present Sanskrit prayer was introduced. In English it would read:

Salutations to you, O Motherland where I am born;
Salutations to you, O the Land of Aryas where I have grown;
Salutations to you, O Sacred Land where I have worked;
My body will ever and again bow to you in salutation.
O Guru, the messenger of Rama, grant us good character;

Give us soon all the virtues to become full Hindus;
Induct us to your grace and make us followers of Rama:
May we become celibate, defenders of faith and men of brave determination.

Victory to Samarth Shri Ramdas, the Guru of the Nation
Victory to Mother India

प्रार्थना

नमस्ते सदा वत्सले मातृभूमे
त्वया हिन्दुभूमे सुखँव् वर्धितोऽहम् ।
महामग्ले पुण्यभूमे त्वदर्थे
पतत्वेष कायो नमस्ते नमस्ते ।। 1 ।।

प्रभो शक्तिमन् हिन्दूराष्ट्राग्भूता
इमे सादरन् त्वान् नमामो वयम्
त्वदीयाय कार्याय बद्धा कटीयम्
शुभामाशिषन् देहि तत्पूर्तये ।
अजय्याञ् च विश्वस्य देहीश शक्तिम्
सुशीलञ् जगद् येन नम्रम् भवेत्
श्रुतञ् चवै यत् कण्टकाकीर्णमार्गम्
स्वयम् स्वीकृतन् नस् सुगग्कारयेत् ।। 2 ।।

समुत्कर्षनिश्श्रेयसस्यैकमुग्रम्
परम् साधनन् नाम वीरव्रतम्
तदन्तस् स्फुरत्वक्षया ध्येयनिष्ठा
हृदन्त) (प्रजागर्तु तीव्राऽनिशम् ।
विजेत्री च नस् सहता कार्यशक्तिर्

विधायास्य धर्मस्य संरक्षणम्
परवँ् वैभवन् नेतुमेतत् स्वराष्ट्रम्
समर्था भवत्वाशिषा ते भृशम् ।। 3 ।।
।। भारत माता की जय ।।

English version of the above Sanskrit prayer which is sung in the RSS shakhas these days is given below:

O Affectionate Motherland, I eternally bow to you.
O Land of Hindus, you have reared me in comfort.
O Sacred Land, the Great Creator of Good, may this body of mine be dedicated to you
I again and again bow before you.

O God Almighty, we the integral parts of Hindu Rashtra salute you in reverence;
For your cause have we girded up our loins,
Give us your blessings for its accomplishment;
Give us also the invincible power, the purity of
character which may win the respect of entire world and
the wisdom which may facilitate the thorny path
that we have consciously adopted.
Let our hearts be inspired by the bold determination
to achieve salvation along with prosperity which
alone is the outstanding means;
Let undying and intense devotion to the goal be
ever alive in our minds;
With your blessings let our all-conquering organised
force meet with eminent success in taking
this Nation of ours to the highest pinnacle
of glory while defending our dharma.

Victory to Mother India !

Appendix - II

RSS PRATIGYA

प्रतिज्ञा

सर्व शक्तिमान श्री परमेश्वर तथा अपने पूर्वजों का स्मरण कर मैं प्रतिज्ञा करता हूँ कि अपने पवित्र हिन्दूधर्म, संस्कृति तथा हिन्दू समाज की अभिवृद्धि कर भारतवर्ष की सर्वांगीण उन्नति करने के लिए मैं राष्ट्रीय स्वयं सेवक संघ का घटक बना हूँ। संघ का कार्य मैं प्रामाणिकता, निःस्वार्थ बुद्धि तथा तन, मन, धन पूर्वक करूँगा और इस व्रत का मैं आजन्म पालन करूँगा।

।। भारत माता की जय ।।

English version of the oath which every candidate is made to take for admission in the Sangh.

Before the All-Powerful God and my ancestors, I most solemnly take this oath, that I have become a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in order to achieve all-round greatness of Bharatvarsh by fostering the growth of my sacred

Hindu religion, Hindu society and Hindu culture. I shall perform the work of the Sangh honestly, disinterestedly, with my heart and soul, and I shall adhere to this oath all my life.

Bharat Mata ki Jai.

(Before 1939 the slogan in the oath was 'Jai Bajrang-Bali Balbhim-ki-Jai'.)

Appendix - III

(Action following Gandhi's Assassination)

RSS DECLARED UNLAWFUL

I

Text of Government communique dated February 4, 1948

In their resolution of February 2, 1948, the Government of India declared their determination to root out the forces of hate and violence that are at work in our country and imperil the freedom of the Nation and darken her fair name. In pursuance of this policy the Government of India have decided to declare unlawful the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in the Chief Commissioner's Provinces. Similar action is also being taken in the Governor's Provinces.

As democratic governments, the Government of India and the provincial governments have always been anxious to allow reasonable scope for genuine political, social and economic activities to all parties and organisations including those whose policies and purposes differ from, or even run counter to their own, subject to the consideration that such activities should not transgress certain commonly recognised limits of propriety or law. The professed aims and objects of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are to promote the physical, intellectual and moral well-being of the Hindus and also to foster feelings of brotherhood, love and service amongst them. Government themselves are most anxious to improve the general material and intellectual well-being of all sections of the people and have got schemes on hand which are designed to carry out these objects, particularly the provision of physical training and education in military matters to the youth of the country. Government have, however, noticed with regret that in practice members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have not adhered to their professed ideals.

Undesirable and even dangerous activities have been carried on by members of the Sangh. It has been found that in several parts of the country individual members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, decoity, and murder and have collected illicit arms and ammunition. They have been found circulating leaflets exhorting people to resort to terrorist methods, to collect fire arms, to create disaffection against the government and suborn the police and the military. These activities have been carried on under a cloak of secrecy, and the government have considered from time to time how far these activities rendered it incumbent on them to deal with the Sangh in its corporate capacity. The last occasion when the government defined this attitude was when the Premiers and the Home Ministers of provinces met in Delhi in conference towards the end of November.

It was then unanimously agreed that the stage when the Sangh should be dealt with as an association had not yet arrived and that individuals should continue to be dealt with sternly as hitherto. The objectionable and harmful activities of the Sangh have, however, continued unabated and the cult of violence sponsored and inspired by the activities of the Sangh has claimed many victims. The latest and the most precious to fall was Gandhiji himself.

In these circumstances it is the bounden duty of the government to take effective measures to curb this reappearance of violence in a virulent form and as a first step to this end, they have decided to declare the Sangh as an unlawful association. Government have no doubt that in taking this measure they have the support of all law-abiding citizens, of all those who have the welfare of the country at heart.

II

GOLWALKAR'S INTERACTION WITH HOME MINISTER SARDAR PATEL

Press Note dated November 14, 1948 issued by the Home Ministry of the Government of India

Soon after his release from prison in Nagpur after the statutory period of six months, Mr. Golwalkar, head of the RSS organisation, made approaches to the government which indicated a possibility that the activities of that organisation might be diverted and confined to channels which would have no harmful effect on the communal situation in the country. He also expressed a desire to interview the Home Minister. In order to enable him to do so, the Government of India requested the CP government to cancel an order issued by them under which Mr. Golwalkar's movements had been restricted to the city of Nagpur and to facilitate his departure for Delhi for the specific purpose of seeing the Home Minister.

Mr. Golwalkar accordingly came to Delhi and had his first interview with the Home Minister soon after his arrival. There was an exchange of views and Mr. Golwalkar wanted some time to consult his followers in an attempt to influence them on the right lines. Some days later he had his second interview during which he expressed his inability to bind himself to any change until the ban was lifted. He felt that the lifting of the ban would strengthen his hands in dealing with his followers. Simultaneously, however, the Government of India had got in touch with provincial governments to acquaint themselves with their views and the latest information about the activities of the RSS. The information received by the Government of India shows that the activities carried on in various forms and ways by the people associated with the RSS tend to be anti-national and often subversive and violent and that persistent attempts are being made by the RSS to revive an atmosphere in the country which was productive of such disastrous consequences in the past. For these reasons, the provincial governments have declared themselves opposed to the withdrawal of the ban and the Government of India have concurred with the view of the provincial governments.

This position was conveyed to Mr. Golwalkar towards the end of the last month and he was told that since the purpose for which he had been allowed to come to Delhi had been served, he should now return to Nagpur. Mr. Golwalkar was not prepared to accept this position and expressed a desire to see the Home Minister and the Prime Minister on their return to Delhi. The Home Minister declined to grant a further interview, but in order to give him a chance to interview the Prime Minister on his return, if the latter so desired, he was allowed to remain in Delhi under certain restrictive orders issued by the District Magistrate of Delhi. Mr. Golwalkar declined to accept the orders of restrictions, but has made no attempts to contravene the restrictions imposed on him. He has written letters both to the Prime Minister and Home Minister explaining inter alia that the RSS agrees entirely in the conception of a secular state for India and that it accepts the National Flag of the country and requesting that the ban imposed on the organisation in February should now be lifted. These professions of the RSS leader are, however, quite inconsistent with the practice of his followers and for the reasons already explained above, the Government of India find themselves unable to advise provincial governments to lift the ban. The Prime Minister has, therefore, declined the interview which Mr. Golwalkar had sought.

Mr. Golwalkar is accordingly being informed that he should make immediate arrangements to return to Nagpur. The Government of India are also taking appropriate steps to ensure that Mr. Golwalkar complies with these instructions.

Appendix - IV

Government communique dated 11 July, 1949 announcing the lifting of ban

"In consultation with the Provincial Governments, the Central Government have had under consideration the question of removal of the ban on the R. S. S. The factors governing the problem clearly emerged during the discussion which the leader of the organisation had with Sardar Patel in October last year. In brief, they were that the R. S. S. should function under a written and published Constitution, restricting its activities to the cultural sphere, abjuring violence and secrecy, professing loyalty to the Constitution of India and the National Flag, and providing for a democratic organisation. The public is already familiar with the history of the breakdown of these talks and the course which events took thereafter.

"Inspite of this, the Government's attitude to this organisation was never prompted by any spirit of vindictiveness and, when certain non-official gentlemen approached them with requests to interview the R. S. S. leader in jail, with a view to persuading him to fulfil the above mentioned conditions, the Government offered them facility to do so. In March this year, the R.S.S. leader wrote to the Government forwarding a draft Constitution, the terms of which were examined by Government in consultation with the Provinces. The Government of India conveyed to the R.S.S. leader their reactions on the draft and he has now generally accepted the suggestions made by the Government of India and the clarifications made by him indicate that the relevant provisions of the Constitution are intended to be worked in the spirit contemplated by the Government.

"The R.S.S. leader has undertaken to make the loyalty to the Union Constitution and respect for the National Flag more explicit in the Constitution of the R.S.S. and to provide clearly that persons believing or resorting to violent and secret methods will have no place in the Sangh. The R.S.S. leader has also clarified that the Constitution will be worked on a democratic basis. In particular, the office of the Sarsanghachalak would, in effect, be elective in that the successor would he nominated with the consent of the then Karyakari Mandal. It would be open to any member of the Sangh to leave it at any time without breaking the pledge and the admission of minors will be subject to the option of the guardian to withdraw his ward under a written request sent to the Sangh authorities.

"In the light of the modifications made and clarifications given by the R.S.S. leader, the Government of India have come to the conclusion that the R.S.S. organisation should be given an opportunity to function as a democratic, cultural organisation owing loyalty to the Indian Constitution and recognising the National Flag eschewing secrecy and abjuring violence. Indeed the Government feel that, under a Constitution embodying these principles and worked in the right spirit, no reasonable objection can be taken to such functioning. They have accordingly decided to withdraw the ban on the organisation in the Centrally administered areas and to release as soon as possible, all R. S. S. men at the present under detention or undergoing sentences of imprisonment in connection with the R. S. S. activities, and have requested the Provincial Governments to take similar action in their own areas."

Appendix - V

CONSTITUTION OF THE RSS

Translated from original in Hindi

Preamble

WHEREAS in the disintegrated conditions of the country it was considered necessary to have an Organisation

(a) to eradicate the fissiparous tendencies arising from diversities of sect, faith, caste and creed and from political, economic, linguistic and provincial differences among Hindus:

(b) to make them realise the greatness of their past;

(c) to inculcate in them a spirit of service sacrifice and selfless devotion to the Hindu Samaj, as a whole;

(d) to build up an organised and well-disciplined corporate life; and

(e) to bring about an all-round regeneration of the Hindu Samaj;

AND WHEREAS the Organisation known as "THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH" was started on the Vijaya Dashmi day in the year 1982 Vikram Samvat (1925 A.D.) by the late Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar;

AND WHEREAS Shri Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar was nominated by the said Dr. Hedgewar to succeed him in the year 1997 Vikram Samvat (1940 A.D.);

AND WHEREAS the Sangh had till now no written constitution;

AND WHEREAS in the present changed conditions, it is deemed expedient to reduce to writing the constitution as also the Aims and Objects of the Sangh and its Method of work;

THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH hereby adopts the following constitution:

The Rules and Regulations

Name

Article I

The name of the Organisation is "THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEWAK SANGH'.

Head Office

Article 2

The Head Office of the Sangh is at NAGPUR.

Aims & Objects

Article 3

The Aims and Objects of the Sangh are to weld together the diverse groups within the Hindu Samaj and to revitalise and rejuvenate the same on the basis of its Dharma and Sanskriti, that it may achieve an all-sided development of the Bharatvarsha.

Policy

Article 4

(a) The Sangh believes in orderly evolution of the Society and adheres to peaceful and legitimate means for the realisation of its ideals.

(b) In consonance with the cultural heritage of the Hindu Samaj, the Sangh has abiding faith in the fundamental principle of tolerance towards all faiths.

The Sangh, as such, has no politics and is devoted purely to cultural work. The individual swayamsewaks, however, may join any political party, except such parties as believe in or resort to violent and secret methods to achieve their ends; persons owing allegiance to such parties or believing in such methods shall have no place in the Sangh.

Flag

Article 5

While recognising the duty of every citizen to be loyal to and to respect the State Flag, the Sangh has as its flag, the 'Bhagwa-Dhwaj' — the age-old symbol of Hindu Culture.

Swayamsewaks

Article 6

1. (a) Any male Hindu of 18 years or more, who subscribes to the Rules and Regulations of the Sangh and takes its pledge, set out in Appendix (a), be registered as a swayamsewak.

(b) A swayamsewak shall be deemed to be an active swayam sewak, if he attends a Sangh shakha regularly or performs specific work duly assigned to him.

(c) A swayamsevak shall cease to be swayamsewak, if he resigns his membership or is expelled for misconduct or indiscipline or any act prejudicial to the interests of the Sangh.

2. *Bal swayamsewak:* Any male Hindu below the age of 18 may be admitted and allowed to participate in the Sangh programmes. They will be classified according to their ages and given suitable training in accordance with the Rules framed for the purpose.

A list of the bal swayamsewaks will be maintained in the units to which they are admitted.

Register of Swayamsewaks

Article 7

(a) Each village, town, city and the provincial centre having a shakha, shall constitute a primary unit of the Sangh.

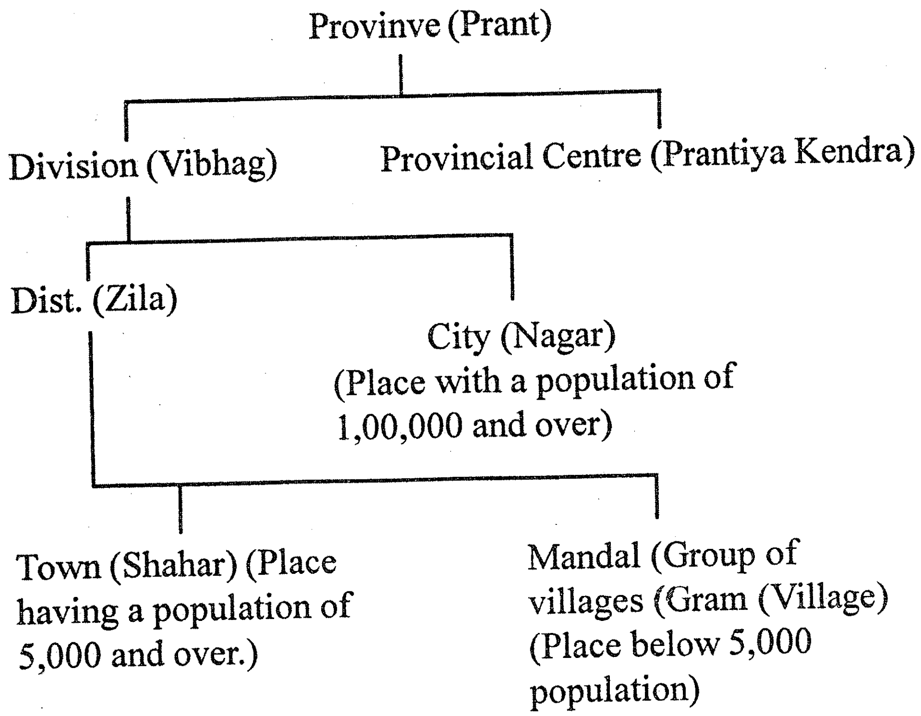
(b) Every shakha shall maintain a register of all its swayamsewaks--active or otherwise.

Constituent Units

Article 8

(a) For organisational purposes, the country, shall be divided into provinces.

(b) Every province may be further subdivided according to their order of subordination as indicated below:


Provinve (Prant)
Division (Vibhag)
Provincial Centre (Prantiya Kendra)
Dist. (Zila)
City (Nagar)
(Place with a population of
1,00,000 and over)
Town (Shahar) (Place
having a population of
5,000 and over.)
Mandal (Group of
villages (Gram (Village)
(Place below 5,000
population)

Elections

Article 9

(a) Elections shall be held after every three years. (b) The date, method and venue of elections shall be determined by the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal.

Qualification for Voters and Candidates for Elections and Appointments

Article 10

(A) Voters:

Every active swayamsewak of at least one year's standing immediately prior to the date of preparation of electoral lists for the elections, shall be entitled to vote in the elections.

(B) Candidates:

(I) He (i.e., a swayamsewak), who is an officer-bearer of a political party, shall not be eligible as a candidate for election or as an appointee to any post so long as he is such an office-bearer.

(2) A candidate for election, for an appointee to any Akhil Bharatiya post, shall be:

(a) An active swayamsewak of at least six years' continuous standing; and

(b) Shall work full time without any remuneration.

(3) An appointee to a provincial post shall be an active swayamsewak of at least three years' continuous standing.

(4) A candidate or appointee for Sangha chalakship shall be an active swayamsewak of at least one year's standing.

Order of Authorities and Bodies

Article 11

There shall be the following authorities and bodies constituted as provided in the Articles shown against their names:

1. Sar Sangha chalak : Art. 12
2. Sar Karyavaha : Art. 13
3. Kendriya Karyakari Mandal : Art. 14
4. Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha : Art. 15
5. Prant, Vibhag, Zila etc. Sangh chalaks : Art. 16
6. Pracharaks : Art. 17
7. Prantiya, Vibhag, Zila, etc. Karyakari Mandals : Art. 19
8. Prantiya Pratindihi Sabha : Art. 19

Sar Sangh Chalak

Article 12

Late Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, the Founder of the Sangh, was the Adya (First) Sar Sangh chalak. Shri Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar was nominated Sar Sangh chalak by him in consultation with the then Kendriya Karyakari Mandal. He is the Sar Sangh chalak since then. The Sar Sangh chalak will nominate his successor, as and when the necessity arises, with the consent of the then Kendriya Karyakari Mandal.

The Sar Sangh chalak is the guide and philosopher of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. He may attend, summon or address any assembly of the swayamsewaks, prantinidhi sabhas, and karyakari mandals, severally or jointly.

Sar Karyavaha

Article 13

(a) The elected members of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (vide Art. 15) shall elect the Sar Karyavaha.

(b) The Sar Karyavaha shall act in consultation with the Sar Sangh chalak.

Kendriya Karyakari Mandal

Article 14

(a) The Sar Karyavaha shall form the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal. The Mandal shall consist of the following office bearers:

(i) Sar Karyavaha (he will preside)

(ii) One or more Sah-Sar Karyavahas.

(iii) Akhil Bharatiya Sharirik Shikshan Pramukh.

(iv) Akhil Bharatiya Bauddhik Shikshan Pramukh.

(v) Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh.

(vi) Akhil Bharatiya Nidhi Pramukh.

(b) The Kendriya Karyakari Mandal shall have in addition not less than five members who shall be chosen from among the Karyakari Mandal of the provinces.

(c) *Functions*

The following will he the functions of the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal:

(i) The KKM is the highest executive authority of the Sangh and as such, will carry into effect the policy and programme laid down by the ABP Sabha. The KKM shall supervise the working of the units.

(ii) The KKM shall control the finance of the Sangh. It may take from the several provincial units such amounts of money, as may from time to time be required for the general advancement of the Sangh work. The KKM may finance such of the units as have insufficient funds of their own.

(iii) The KKM shall appoint one or more auditors to audit the accounts of the Sangh annually.

(iv) The Kendriya Karyakari Mandal may shift the Head Office to or establish one or more sub-head office at places wherever it may deem proper.

(v) The KKM in consultation with the Prantiya Karyakari Mandals concerned, may redistribute the provinces.

(vi) The KKM shall be the highest authority for taking such disciplinary action against any swayamsevak as may be necessary.

(viii) The KKM will frame rules and bye-laws, in consonance with the Constitution, for the purpose of uniformity in rules and procedure and for the proper functioning of the Sangh.

Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha

Article 15

(a) The elected members of a Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall elect from amongst themselves one-eighth of their number as representatives of the province on the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha.

(b) Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall consist of:

(i) Representatives of the delegates.

(ii) Sangh chalaks and pracharaks of divisions and provinces and provincial centres.

(iii) Members of the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal.

(c) The Sar Karyavaha shall preside over the ABPS.

(d) The Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall meet at least once a year.

(e) The Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall review the work and lay down the policy and programme of the Sangh.

Sangh Chalaks

Article 16

(a) Every province, provincial centre, division, district, tehsil, city and town may have a Sangh chalak.

(b) The prant Sangh chalak shall be elected by delegates elected as per Article 19(a).

(c) The Sangh chalaks for the constituent units in the provinces shall be annually appointed by the prant Sangh chalak in consultation with the prant-pracharak.

(d) In case a suitable person is not available for the office of Sangh chalak, the prant Sangh chalak may appoint a karyavaha. The karyavaha, so appointed, shall perform the duties of a Sangh chalak.

(e) In case of death, departure, prolonged illness or resignation of the prant Sangh chalak the Kendriya Karyakari mandal shall appoint a person to discharge the duties of the prant Sangh chalak.

Pracharaks

Article 17

(a) (i) Pracharaks shall be full-time workers selected from amongst those devoted workers of high integrity whose mission is to serve the society through the Sangh and who, of their own free will, dedicate themselves to the Cause.

(ii) They will receive no remuneration.

(b) Appointment of pracharaks:

(i) The Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh will appoint prant pracharaks with the consent of the Sar Karyavaha and in consultation with the Sangh chalaks concerned.

(ii) The prant pracharak will appoint pracharaks for different units in the province in consultation with the prant Sangh chalak.

(c) The ultimate authority for the appointment, transfer or discontinuance of the service of the pracharaks shall vest in the Sar Karyavaha.

Prantiya Subordinate Karyakari Mandals

Article 18

(a) Sangh chalak of a province, provincial centre, division, district, tehsil, city or town will form a karyakari mandal consisting of the following office-bearers:

(i) The Sangh chalak (he will preside).
(ii) Pracharak [appointed under Article 17(b)].
(iii) Karyavaha.
(iv) Bauddhik Shikshan Pramukh.
(v) Sharirik Shikshan Pramukh.
(vi) Nidhi Pramukh.

(b) Each karyakari mandal shall also have in addition not less than three members chosen from amongst the karyakari mandals of the subordinate units, if any.

(c) Karyakari mandals will be the highest executive authorities in their respective units, responsible to the immediately superior karyakari mandal for implementing the policy and carrying out the programme laid down by the ABP Sabha. They shall supervise the Sangh work in their respective units and control the finances.

(d) Karyakari mandals will have the power to take disciplinary action against any individual swayamsevak for breach of discipline or behaviour prejudicial to the interests and honour of the Sangh. Such an action is subject to confirmation by the Karyakari Mandal of the superior unit.

(e) The PKM with sanction of the KKM may change the provincial centre.

(f) The Prantiya Karyakari Mandal may, if necessary reconstitute the various units in the province.

(g) The Prantiya Karyakari Mandal may frame rules in consonance with the Constitution and the rules framed by the

Kendriya Karyakari Mandal for the proper functioning of the Sangh in the province.

(h) For mandals and places with a population of less than 5,000 a karyavaha will be appointed by the Sangh chalak of the superior unit. He will be responsible for the Sangh work in his unit.

Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha

Article 19

(a) Districts, cities and the provincial centre will send for every fifty swayamsewaks entitled to vote, one such swayamsewak as delegate to the Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha.

(b) The Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall consist of:

(i) The elected delegates.

(ii) Sangh Chalaks and pracharaks of divisions, districts, cities and of the provincial centre.

(iii) Members of the Prantiya Karyakari Mandal.

(c) The Prant Sagh Chalak will preside over the Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha.

(d) The Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall meet at least once a year.

(e) The Prantiya Pratinidhi Sabha shall review the work in the province and make such recommendations to the PKM as it may deem fit.

Programmes

Article 20

The existing branches of the Sangh will continue subject to the provisions of the Constitution.

New branches may be opened.

Physical training will be given by means of exercises and games organised at a convenient hour every day.

Occasional talks and lectures will be arranged for imparting intellectual training and inculcating love for ideals of Hindu dharma and culture.

Periodical classes for swayamsewaks to be trained as instructors and workers will be arranged.

Festivals of cultural importance will be celebrated and members of the public may be invited on such occasions.

Agencies and institutions may be established to disseminate knowledge of the ideals and activities of the Sangh and to educate the people generally.

In general, the Sangh may do all such things and carry on any other work capable of being undertaken in connection with and calculated, directly or indirectly, to promote and achieve any of the objects mentioned in Art. 3.

Meetings, Conferences, Rallies and Training Classes

Article 21

(a) All karyakari mandals will meet as often as necessary but at least once in the period shown below against each:

KKM - Four months.
PKM - Four months.
VKM - Three months.
ZKM - Three months.
Teh. KM - Two months.
Other KMs - One month.

(b) The workers or swayamsewaks of any unit or of two or more co-ordinate units may have combined programmes and meet together in conferences, rallies or training classes, with the previous permission of the proper authorities of the superior unit.

(c) The KKM may arrange Akhil Bharatiya Conference and rallies of workers and swayamsewaks.

(d) The KKM shall organise training classes called Adhikari Shikshan Varga at different places in the country to impart training in the Sangh work. Swayamsewaks thus trained in the prescribed three years course will be qualified instructors.

Funds

Article 22

(a) All offerings, gifts, donations, etc., received for Sangh purposes by the branches shall constitute the Sangh Funds.

(b) On the 'Vyas Poornima' function of every year or any other sacred day fixed for the purpose, every branch will celebrate the 'Dakshina Day' and will receive voluntary offerings.

(c) The funds received by the branch will be entrusted by the Sangh chalak to the nidhi pramukh of the branch concerned, who will be responsible for maintaining proper accounts, which shall be annually audited.

(d) The funds received by a village branch will remain with the karyavaha of that branch. The Tehsil Nidhi Pramukh will supervise the management of funds of all such branches within the tehsil.

(e) The KKM and PKM shall issue such directions for the disbursement of the funds collected by its subordinate units as it may from time to time think necessary for the general advancement of the Sangh work.

Quorum

Article 23

One half of the total strength shall form the quorum for the meetings of the various karyakari mandals, and one-fifth for the Prantiya and Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabhas.

Undeveloped Units

Article 24

(a) In case of provinces in which the work has not yet developed to an appreciable level, elections shall not be held, and the Prant Pracharak appointed shall be in sole charge of the work.

(b) The province shall be deemed to be developed when:

The number of active swayamsewaks reaches one thousand in that province.

Provided the KKM is satisfied with the general progress of the work in that province.

The KKM, however, may provide to such provinces due representation on the Akhil Bharatiya Sabha in a manner it deems fit.

Interpretation and Amendment of the Constitution

Article 25

(a) The interpretation of the Constitution and its clauses by the Kendriya Karyakari Mandal shall be final.

(b) An Amendment to the Constitution can be proposed to the KKM by any PKM or by any other karyakari mandal with the recommendation of the respective PKM of any twenty-five members of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha. The KKM will put the proposal of an amendment before the PKMs, and the amendment will be deemed carried if two-thirds of the provinces agree by a simple majority.

(c) The decisions of the PKMs over such amendments may be brought for reconsideration before the ABP Sabha on a requisition by any twenty-five members of that Sabha. The decision of the ABP Sabha in this behalf, taken by two-thirds majority shall be final.

Appendix B

Abbreviations

Sangh : Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh.
ABPS : Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha.
KKM : Kendriya Karyakari Mandal.
PKM : Prantiya Karyakari Mandal.
VKM : Vibhag Karyakari Mandal.
ZKM : Zila Karyakari Mandal.
TKM : Tehsil Karyakari Mandal.
KM : Karyakari Mandal.

Appendix - VI

DEORAS LETTERS

The following letters written by RSS Sar Sangh chalak Balasaheb Deoras to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Vinobaji respectively are originally in Hindi and their English translation (as given in the book **Five-headed Monster)** *by Brahm Dutt is being reproduced below:*

(I)

Yerwada Central Jail
Pune-6.
Dated 22-8-1975

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister,
Bharat, New Delhi.

Respectful Namaskar,

From the jail, I listened with rapt attention to your broadcast message relayed from AIR and addressed to the Nation on August 15, 1975. Your speech was suitable for the occasion and well balanced, so I took the pen to write this letter.

I had been placed under house arrest at Nagpur on 30-5-75. After some time I was brought to Pune from Nagpur and was kept in jail.

On July 4, 1975 the Central Government banned the RSS after promulgating a special ordinance. Whatever information and knowledge one could gather from the newspapers, it appears that the activities of the organisation and its organisers have been a hurdle to internal safety, universal peace and smooth running of the government. After studying all these causes, the RSS has been banned. Approximately 23,000 workers and organisers have been arrested in different parts of the country, a fact which has been confirmed and corroborated by the newspapers.

In the meantime I could read the speeches of some of your leaders and officials and their interviews published therein. I take the privilege to correspond with you on the basis of these newspapers' briefs.

What could possibly be the right cause of banning the Sangh through the ordinance is difficult to assess. The RSS has never done anything as might hamper the smooth running of the government, the internal security and peace of the country. The aim of the Sangh is to unite the all India Hindu community, to organise and energise the same. The organisation tries to discipline our society. With that idea in view, the Sangh follows the path and along with the same, appropriate steps are taken to execute the programme. Hence there is no such factor within the Sangh fold as would cause internal disturbances and disruption to security and peace.

Some people occasionally level charges against the RSS. It is not possible to refute all such allegations in this letter. Still it is necessary to clarify that the organisation has never advocated the cause of violence, neither believes in such teaching. During 50 years, not a single example, which can prove that RSS volunteers ever were violent and oppressive, has been witnessed. Many acts of violence and disturbances have been experienced but neither the courts nor the commissions appointed by the government ever reported that the RSS volunteers were responsible for the same.

Hence it is obvious that the Sangh never committed any such incriminating act. The Sangh does not stand for introduction or initiation of the same.

Still some people, being prejudiced from the beginning, bring false allegations against the Sangh. For example people in haste tried to implicate the Sangh in the murder of Late L.N. Misra. Now, after a thorough probe, it has come to light that there is no connection of this incident with this organisation. There are even some people who falsely allege that the Sangh had a hand in Gandhiji's murder too. It has already been proved that the Sangh was not in the least involved in this incident and hence there is nothing more to write in this letter about that. All the officials of the Sangh are the recognised citizens of the society. There are some persons who allege that RSS is a communal organisation. But their charges are baseless. Though the field of the Sangh is limited only to the Hindu community, yet nothing is taught here against any non-Hindu society It is a white lie to say that hymns of hatred are taught or sung in the Sangh. No unpalatable word is uttered in the Sangh against Islam, against Mohammad the Prophet, the Koran and the Christian religion, against Jesus Christ and Bible. Not only this, but *"Sarva Dharma Sambhav Mane Ekamsad Vipra Bahuda Vadanti"* which is the main characteristic of the Hindu religion, the Sangh attaches greatest importance to that. There exists a cordial relation between many RSS workers and people of different faiths--the Muslims, the Christians, the Parsees and others. The social problems of the Hindus and the non-Hindu communities differ from each other Hence RSS has confined its activities to the Hindu community only. The Sangh's effort is to do away with casteism, with linguistic differences, with the feeling of separatism between the high-ups and the low-downs due to various causes and to unite the entire Hindu community as one. You shall also feel its dire necessity and agree to this sort of work. It is well apparent from this that RSS is not a communal or anti-national organisation as thought of. It is the belief of the Sangh that all should enjoy the liberty of their own ritualism.

The RSS is trying to selflessly make every person of the Hindu community or society a good citizen, a patriot and a person of character. It is really a misfortune if the organisation is banned by the order of our own government.

It is no magic to improve immediately the condition of our society along with the conditions of the tribals, the down-trodden and the poor people. This path is long, thorny and full of selfless actions. Cooperation of many is needed for this task. "The real power of the community lies in one's own field; hence one should devote oneself with honesty to this task" as you said in your speech delivered on August, 15, 1975 inviting the entire country to this work, it was most befitting the occasion and the time. The work of RSS has extended to every nook and corner of the whole of India. People from every class and stratum of our society are there. Many selfless workers are in the Sangh. The entire work of the Sangh is based on selfless thought. It is necessary to properly utilise such power of the Sangh for the upliftment of our country.

It is prayed that you shall kindly reconsider this, leaving aside your prejudices and bias. Liberty of organisation is a fundamental right in all democratic countries. This is my humble prayer to you that you shall kindly keep the above in view and shall lift the ban on RSS. If you think it proper, my meeting with you will be a source of pleasure to me.

Yours faithfully,
MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS

(II)

Respected Smt. Indira Gandhiji,
Prime Minister
Government of India
New Delhi

Yervada Central Jail
Pune-6.
Dated 10-11-1975

Respectful Namaskar,

Let me congratulate you as five judges of the Supreme Court have declared the validity of your election.

I wrote a letter to you from Yervada jail on 22-8-75. That letter ought to have reached you directly but contrary to that the letter went to the Maharashtra government and from there it was dispatched to you. I have been intimated so. You might have received the same. I am waiting for the reply from your end.

I am not going to repeat now in this letter of mine the contents of my letter dated 22-8-75. But in the meantime I could go through the Marathi edition of two government publications in the form of booklets in which your speech delivered in the Parliament on July 22, 1975, and your narration of causes in support of the emergency were published.

Many allegations have been introduced in your speech and in the booklets, basing the facts on the interpretations. They are definitely incorrect.

Some sentences from the books of the late respected Golwalkarji's two books *Our Nationhood Defined* and *Bunch of Thoughts* have been quoted in the aforesaid booklet. Late Golwalkarji was a great thinker like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. It was also natural for him to speak and to write on various subjects other than the clear cut policies of the Sangh. Those thoughts of his cannot be understood without any context. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "A Muslim is a bully and a Hindu is a coward". Pt. Nehru pleaded the cause of the Muslims only to avail the support of Muslim brethren. To speak thus or criticise thus tantamounts to the criticism in respect of a particular profession. Guruji never criticised either the Muslim religion or Mohammad, the Prophet, or the Koran, neither Christianity or Jesus Christ or the Bible.

You have mentioned in your speech about the reports of one or two commissions. Attempt has been made to implicate the Sangh with disturbances, after taking one or two words from those reports. Several disturbances, or riots have occurred till now. Commissions were appointed in connection with the same. But those commissions declared that the Sangh had no hand in such riots. There is no such example wherein any worker or the official of the Sangh had been sentenced in any legal cases after the riots.

You have mentioned about a letter of Sardar Patel in connection with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Sri Patel was the Home Minister and it was natural for him to write such a letter in support of the government policy. But a published booklet containing his opinions includes also a letter written to the Prime Minister in which he has expressed his conviction about the Sangh having no connection in the least with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. You might have no knowledge about this letter.

You have called the Sangh 'a fascist organisation'. You have also said that the meaning of fascism is 'propaganda of lies'. Whatever charges you have levelled against the Sangh for spreading rumours etc., they are all baseless. Examples abound all over the world regarding rumour-mongering which spread in the society even after the censorship is clamped over newspapers. Hence it is improper to allege against the Sangh for spreading rumours.

There is always a programme of action along with the thoughts on fascism. From these two standpoints the Sangh bears no relationship with fascism. The fascists of Italy and the Nazis of Germany called themselves 'National Socialists'. The thinking process of the Sangh is mainly based on Hindu spiritualism. From the practical standpoint they are fascists who do not fall in line with those who disagree with them and are oppressive, those who question the power to rule and those who oppress. Sangh keeps itself aloof from the power politics. People are inspired by the aims and objects of the Sangh and they feel attracted to it voluntarily. Under these circumstances to term the Sangh as a fascist organisation is utterly improper.

The Sangh has been referred to in connection with the movement of Jaya Prakash Narayan. The name of the Sangh has been linked with the Bihar and the Gujarat movements again and again and without any cause. In reference to the clarification of the fact that the Sangh has no connection with these movements I have mentioned mainly two points. The first, these movements took place as a result of growing dissatisfaction among the public in general. Hence you and we all are responsible for the same. Second, it is improper and discourteous to call Jaya Prakash Narayan as a CIA agent, a party to capitalists or a traitor. He is also a patriot. Such ideas have been expressed in many of your speeches.

Every time in my lectures I have protested against the lawlessness in our country. The Sangh and lawlessness are two contradictory words.

> *"Arajakeshu Rashtreshu Pharmo Na Vyavatishthate*
> *Parasparam Cha Khadanti, Sasmat, Phik Arajakam".*

Quoting this from Mahabharta, I myself have opposed and forbidden such disloyalty.

This is not the place to reply to all the charges against the Sangh. It is not even possible through letters. It can possibly be clarified during our meetings. But still it should be made explicit that legislation or law made by you is far from the reality. It is just the same to beat the ground in pretence of a snake. Your legislation is based on wrong conception. This has so happened as a result of your being conversant with wrong and imaginative information given to you by some persons interested in politics.

This is my belief that you might have been informed by your administrative machinery that the officials and the RSS volunteers are honourable citizens. They initiate at their own places in the fields of public work, of education, of culture etc. The work of the Sangh has all along been spotless and innocent. Such information too, you might have received.

Hence this is my request to you that you kindly assume the correct impression about the Sangh, after taking into consideration its correct position and after giving up your bias against it. Set free thousands of RSS workers and remove the restrictions on the Sangh. If done so, power of selfless work on the part of lakhs of RSS volunteers will be utilised for national upliftment (government as well as non-government) and as we all wish, our country will be prosperous.

Awaiting the reply of my letter;

Yours faithfully,
MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS

* * * * * *

(III)

At the feet of Respected Acharya Vinobaji,

A meeting of the acharyas of our country under your guidance has been scheduled to be held on the 16th, 17th and 18th January and it has been informed that discussions regarding the deteriorated condition of country are going to be held.

I am happy to learn this; I have started believing that, during these discussions, some ways are to be found out of the emergent situation. On this occasion, what smaller role is to be played by me is the content of this brief letter.

After the death of the most revered Guruji, the responsibility of the Sangh's activities was shouldered by me. I had also come to Pavnar for your "darshan". You gave me your "darshan" and blessed me. I remember this daily. I am trying my level best to discharge my responsibilities on the strength of your sacred blessings.

Both you and Guruji were well acquainted. At times when both of you met, matters relating to the state, the time and the activities of the Sangh were discussed. When I came to meet you, such discussions were held. Not only this, you inspired and blessed me for the working of the Sangh by saying, "Please take me to be an uncivilised member of the Sangh."

As before, an unforeseen restriction was clamped down on the Sangh on account of my association with the same and after being arrested, I was kept in the Yerwada jail. Thus all over the country in different places thousands of workers and officials were thrust into jail. The sequence of such arrests is still continuing.

From my point of view such ban on the Sangh and the arrests of so many volunteers is based on a wrong conception. Particularly it appears that many people around Smt. Indira Gandhi were made to harbour a wrong idea about the Sangh. No opportunity was availed regarding the removal of this wrong impression about the Sangh and the presentation of its real picture as a result of which this calamity befell on the workers of the organisation.

From this Jail, I attempted twice to let Shrimati Indira Gandhi know about what my role was but it did not appear if that had received her attention as yet. Not only this, I had not been even informed about the receipt of my letters.

Many charges are levelled against the Sangh and the Sangh is put to harsh one-sided criticism. All these charges against the Sangh are false and baseless. The contents of this letter are not meant for the reply to these charges. You are well acquainted with the goal of the Sangh, its work and the process of the work.

It is true that the Sangh wants to organise the Hindu community but that does not make it communal or national. It is beyond one's understanding how the outlook of Hinduism can be narrow and communal. The matter would have been different if at the time of organising the Hindus we would have done anything wrong against the non-Hindus. Not a single word of aspersion is uttered against the followers of other religions. Neither it is taught to hate others than those of Hindus. In as much as the lectures of Respected Guruji have referred respectfully to the Koran, the Prophet Mohammad, the Islamic religion, to Jesus Christ, the Bible and Christianity.

For these last 30 years, the work of the Sangh is being done openly on the open fields. During this period some riots broke out between the Hindus and the Muslims but even in such a fray the Sangh never took part. Commissions were appointed after such communal disturbances. Reports of the same had also been received. The Sangh never was found responsible and no one was ever sued in the Court.

Some persons think, without rhyme or reason, that the Sangh encourages violence. But this is a very wrong notion. The Sangh does not have faith in the least in the creed of violence. The Sangh has neither been violent nor encouraged acts of violence.

The main function of the Sangh is to rectify man. The RSS volunteers are asked to observe control and discipline, hence it can have no place for violence. In the lectures of Respected Guruji and mine too disloyalty and violence have been criticised vehemently.

> *"Arajkeshu Rashtreshu Dharmo Na Vyavatishthate*
> *Parasparam Cha Khadanti, Tasmat, Dhik Arajakam".*

Quoting the above as a proof, stress has been given on non-violence and peaceful transition.

The Sangh is alleged to be a fascist organisation. How can that organisation become a fascist one when it has all along been far from politics of grabbing power and where people being inspired by the ideal come, can and do come, voluntarily?

Those who create awe amongst people after achieving power and status and utilising the same power oppress and repress others are called fascists. The Sangh can never be termed so. The view of the Sangh is based on ethical principles and spiritual heredity. As it is, it is totally wrong, unjust and false to call Sangh a fascist organisation. This is our mode of thinking and our behaviour that the voluntary organisations should keep themselves aloof after rectifying the people. This is all known to you. Hence, now that you and the educated people of our country are about to discuss the present critical and dangerous situation of our country, it is natural, discussions will now be going on regarding RSS. You are in the know of everything about the Sangh. So this is my prayer that you should come at the forefront and find out such worthy ways by following which the Sangh can work as before so that its power can be utilised in constructive work.

Praying for your blessings,

Yours faithfully
MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS

Acharya Vinoba Bhave
Pavnar Ashram
Wardha
Distt. Wardha

(IV)

St George's Hospital
Prison Ward No. 14
Bombay.

At the feet of Respected Acharya Vinobaji'

I wrote a letter to you from Yerwada Jail on 12-1-76. You might have received that at the time when the conference of the acharyas was going to begin. I hope so. I wrote in that letter what the Sangh had to say in reply to the recent charges levelled against it, and I prayed to you that you should help for the removal of the ban on the Sangh.

All of our friends became hopeful about the future, bright prospect as a result of your guidance at the conference of the acharyas, of deliberations and of unanimous verdict which we could read in the newspapers.

As far as I remember I think you and Guruji met at Keljhar (Nagpur-Wardha Road). When you had asked Guruji whether his angle of vision in respect of other religions was that of tolerance, Guruji had told you that we were not only tolerant to other religions, more so, we respect even those religions.

When you were on padayatra for Bhudan in UP, Bihar and other states, the RSS volunteers met you every where and participated in every programme of yours. What type of behaviour and thoughts the swayamsewaks of Sangh have, you are well acquainted with that.

It has been published in the newspapers that the Hon'ble Prime Minister is going to meet you at the Pavnar Ashram on the 24th. Discussion relating to the present-day situation of our country will be held. This is my prayer to you that you kindly try to remove the wrong notion of the Prime Minister about the Sangh, and as a result of which the RSS volunteers will be set free, the ban on the Sangh will be lifted and such a condition will prevail as to enable the volunteers of the Sangh to participate in the planned programme of action relating to country's progress and prosperity under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

Praying for your blessings,

Yours faithfully,
MADHUKAR DATTATREYA DEORAS
Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh

N.B.

You might not have received my letter dated 12/1, hence I am sending you the copy of the same.

M.D. DEORAS

Appendix - VII

(Provocative Pamphlets distributed in Gujarat)

(I)

Miracle in Baroda

The VHP boasts of having taught Christian missionaries a lesson *(Reproduced below is the English translation of the news item that originally appeared in Vishwa Hindu Parishad News, April 1998 in Gujarati published from Baroda).*

Heading: 'BARODA: Strong protests and agitation by Hindu youth against 'Christianisation' and 'Blind Faith'

Christian missionaries are actively working to convert Hindus in thousands in Gujarat. Between March 4 and 7, 1998, a prayer meeting in the name of *'Jesus Mahotsav'* was arranged in the Polo ground at Baroda where a large stage had been erected and a band of native and foreign missionaries and priests had landed. Under the pretext of the four-day-long *'Jesus Mahotsav'*, they embarked on a plan of large-scale conversion of poor and gullible people.

For this, they spent lakhs of rupees. All over Baroda city and suburbs they distributed more than five lakh pamphlets and 5,000 banners were put up in Baroda city. Besides, about 100 large size hoardings were also set up in different parts of the city. They also issued a big advertisement in the newspapers spending a large sum of money. In the last five days prior to the '*Mahotsav*', a major publicity campaign was carried on. The advertisements and pamphlets carried the following message: "The blind sees, the lame walks, the deaf hears."

While all these campaigns were going on claiming that all these miracles will happen on stage in full public view by means of prayer, the vigilant Hindu youth of Baroda asked: "If all these things can happen by means of prayer alone, why do Christian missionaries run hospitals and dispensaries? If the blind can see, why don't they go to the blind schools and heal them? Why did Mother Theresa remain hospitalised for months together? Why was she not healed through prayer? What is the necessity of running schools for the deaf and dumb?"

But the claim to heal people through prayers is simply a hoax meant to mislead poor and simple people in order to convert them to Christianity. Arrangements had been made for bringing the poor, *vanvasi*, backward and down-trodden people from various distant villages by engaging buses. Such efforts at large-scale conversion to Christianity have been going on in Baroda city for a long time. In other parts of Gujarat, like Kheda and other *vanvasi* areas, similar large-scale conversion activity has been continuing. In Baroda, too, this was the intention of the Christian missionaries.

Vigilant and enlightened Hindus of Baroda were outraged by such efforts of these Christian missionaries to convert people to Christianity by spreading blind beliefs. They were determined to see that this would not be allowed to succeed.

The anger of Baroda's Hindus was kindled. Hindu youth from the VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and various other organisations were also very angry. Because of this raging anger of vigilant and alert Hindi youth, the stage of the missionaries erected on the polo ground was set on fire. In response to a call, about 200-300 youth climbed on the stage and demanded that the blind faith being spread by these missionaries be stopped immediately. The police indulged in a lathi-charge and rounded up 50 young men. The *'Mahotsav'* banners displayed throughout the city were brought down and burnt. The hoardings erected at different places, too, were broken down. The angry Hindu youth also smashed the windowpanes of the buses which were used for transporting the *vanvasis*.

The Hindu community, instead showed these missionaries who were preaching about miracles, a miracle! A special element of the campaign of the missionaries was that there banners and posters were concentrated near temples in the city which were visited by large numbers of Hindus for *darshan*.

As a result of the call of the Hindu I community the stage was burnt down. I But the missionaries repaired and re- I arranged the stage and commenced their programme. Just then, around 200 young men forcibly climbed on the stage and shouted slogans demanding stoppage of the programme.

Taking into consideration the strong protest of the Hindu community, the organiser of this programme, George Parmar, was arrested by the police and the permission for holding the programme was cancelled.

The Hindu people of Baroda who have become extra alert and active since the abduction of young Hindu women, are no longer prepared to tolerate religious conversions.

After the programme of the Christian missionaries had been aborted, a programme on which they had spent lakhs of rupees, the president of Baroda Mahanagar, Ajaybhai Joshi, Rameshbhai Bhatt, Shirishbhai Kulkarni, Niraj Jain, Ramanbhai Padhiar, Vijay Patel of Bajrang Dal, Kanubhai Ganotri, Ashokbhai etc., presented a memorandum to the police commissioner. The memorandum made a strong representation against such elements, against the complacent police officers for allowing such programmes, and demanded that all cases against the VHP/Bajrang Dal/Durga Vahini/

ABVP workers be withdrawn and strict steps be taken to refuse permission for such *sammelans* in future.

(II)

Onwards to Sanjeli !

English translation of a pamphlet in Gujarati, which was widely circulated in Sanjeli town and its neighbourhood a full month before the attack on the Muslims on August 12 and 15.

Let's unite - to stop young , tribal women from being lured and kidnapped. Let us unite to put an end to these unholy incidents of Hindu women being sold in Muslim countries -- Let's respond to bricks with stones.

Onwards to Sanjeli! Public meeting Onwards to Sanjeli!
Date: July 7, 1998, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.
At Rein Bassera, Sanjeli
Leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and
Bajrang Dal to address the meeting

A young, 18-year-old woman, Kanta, of Randhikpur, and another married adivasi woman were seduced and kidnapped to some unknown destination by Muslim youths. We have no trace of them. This is not the first incident in our area. Whether it is Vandana from Bandibaar, or Ami and Surekha from Jhalod, or Varsha from Godhra. There have been innumerable such incidents of kidnapping and disappearances. For months and years, our sisters and daughters cannot be traced. Apart from that, tragic incidents like the suicides of several elders like Magabhai Ninama keep happening in our society.

Hindu young women are kidnapped and
Hindu elders commit suicide
Hindu population on the decline

Produce more children by kidnapping young women
Add to Muslim population
A widespread conspiracy to add to the numbers of anti-Hindu, anti-national elements is at work throughout the country

For the establishment of Ram Rajya, it was the people alone who came forward to help Bhagwan Ram. Now too, *adivasi* brethren will have to come forward and unite to destroy this conspiracy.

When there is a weekly village market what do these Muslim loafers do? How do these Muslim loafers behave with Adivasi women going to the river for river sand? Pretending to help, do you know how these loafers tempt and lure young *adivasi* women and their elders?

Without expecting anything from the police, the government, or any of the politicians who are only interested in securing our votes—come—let us save our sisters and daughters from the clutches of these *yavanas* (demons) who sell them to the Arabs.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad — Bajrang Dal — Sanjeli

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